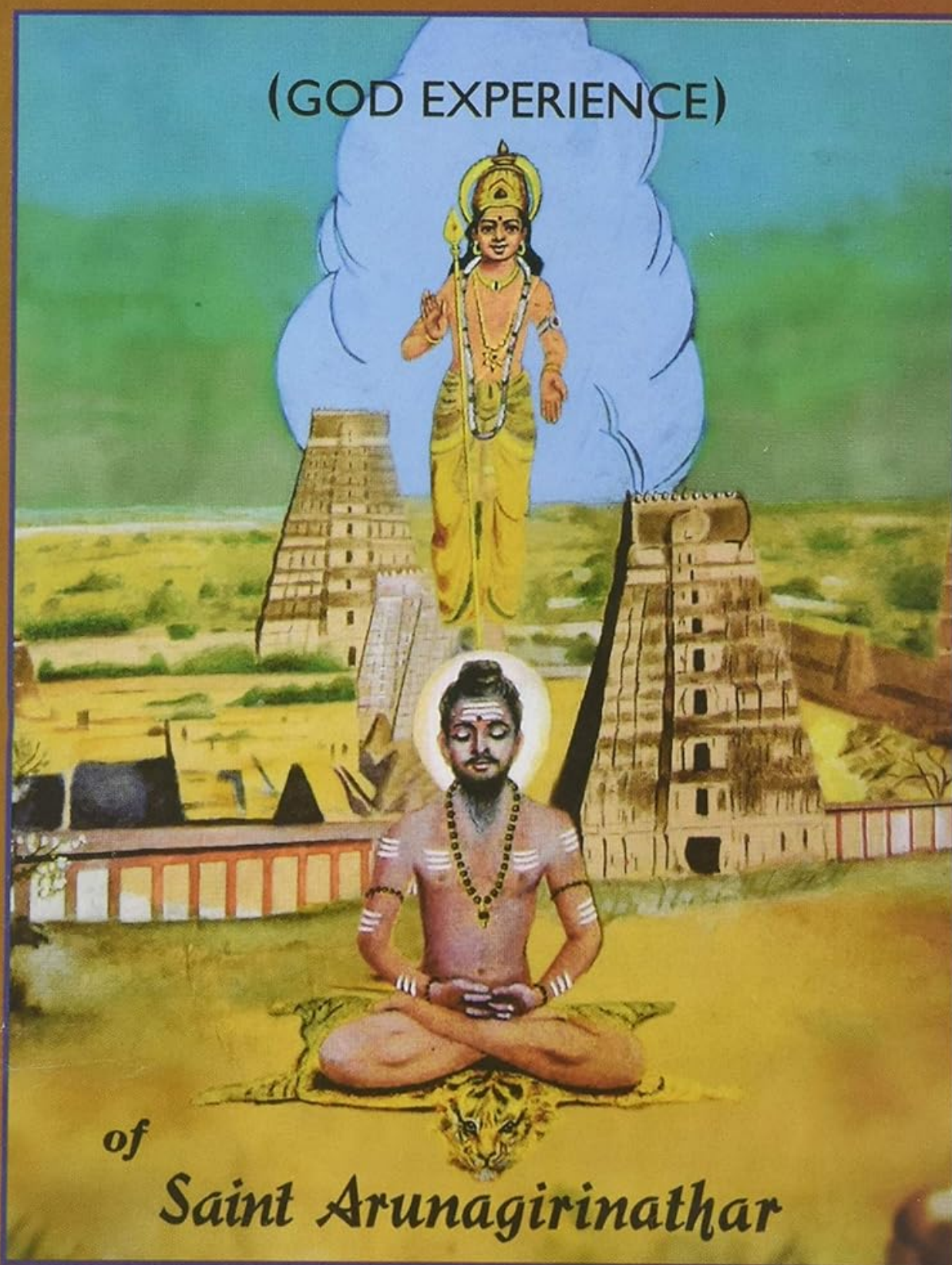


KANDAR ANUBHUTI

(GOD EXPERIENCE)



of
Saint Arunagirinathar

N.V. Karthikeyan

KANDAR ANUBHUTI

(GOD-EXPERIENCE)

OF

SAINT ARUNAGIRINATHAR

By

N.V. KARTHIKEYAN



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DEDICATED

To

Satguru Swami Sivananda
(My Divine Master)

Saint Arunagirinathar
(The Illustrious Author)

and

The Almighty Lord Skanda
(The Bestower of *Anubhuti*)

PUBLISHERS' NOTE TO THE FIRST EDITION

Among the publications of the Divine Life Society, there have been several categories of works, dealing with subjects which pertain to different branches of study in human knowledge. They range from anatomy and physiology and physical exercise, to the many other stages of human evolution,—health, psychology, morality, philosophy, sociology, mysticism. There are other texts which do not merely expatiate upon a subject but at the same time reveal human nature and relationship. But, above all, stand those rare treatises which go to the very depth of the theme expounded and discover in it the root of the very investigation itself,—the disease as well as the medicine comes out, one reacting upon the other, and leaving health as the pure and normal condition. Herein, through the acute study of the author of this book, readers will realise to their satisfaction a presentation to the liking of their hearts, touching, explaining and solving problems which lie buried at the bottom of things. Here, again, will one and all come to a fulfilment of vital issues that usually escape the notice of the superficial eye. Here shall, verily, be a satiation of the spirit which seeks to know the final cause of experience and receive an answer to the vexing questions of the recesses of man's nature.

Shivanandanagar,
25th May, 1972.

—THE DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY

PUBLISHERS' NOTE TO THE SECOND EDITION

This commentary on the KANDAR ANUBHUTI is, perhaps, still the only one available in English in such great depth and serving as a sure guide to seekers in the Inner Path.

Though the first edition went out of print within a few years of its publication and there was a constant demand for its reprint, the Society could not bring out the second edition earlier due to its pre-occupation with the reprinting of the 100 works of Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj for his Birth Centenary Celebrations in September, 1987.

It is with great satisfaction and confidence that we present this edition in the service of the seeking souls around the world, many of whom have known the author personally during his four global tours, during the Eighties, the last of which he finished in February, 1990, with the firm hope that the work will fulfil the needs of their aspirations in their endeavour to attain God-Experience.

The Society is grateful to the donors of this Publication, for their magnanimity and spontaneity. May God bless them.

Shivanandanagar,
15th March, 1990.

—THE DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY

FOREWORDS

I

Om Skandam Vande Loka-Gurum Om.

Salutations to Lord Karttikeya, personification of the Power of Grace of Lord Siva, the Divine Leader of the celestial hosts, the beloved off-spring of Mother Para-Sakti or Vidya Maya and the mysterious Sadhana-Sakti infilling the pure hearts of sincere seekers on the path to Divine Experience! May His blessings be upon you all!

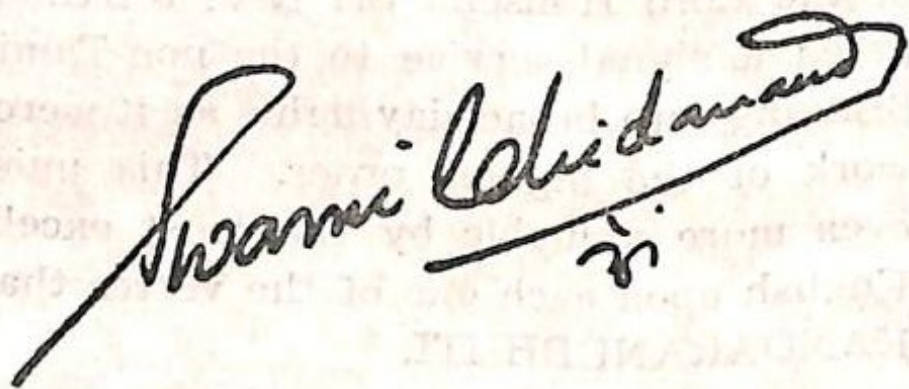
It gives me the greatest pleasure to write these words in respect of this present work, namely, an English rendering of the renowned Tamil work "KANDARANUBHUTI" by the great Saivite Saint Sri Arunagirinathar of Tiruvannamalai in South India. This highly mystical, poetical work is shiningly radiant with the Light of Transcendental Experience. The rare and supreme treasure of God-Experience is made available to the eager souls in quest of God through this sublime poem replete with the ecstatic bliss of the wonderful Saint Arunagiri who gave it to the world. But locked up in the close confines of the original Tamil language this unparalleled wealth and spiritual treasure was lost to the great majority of the aspirant-world. Therefore, great indeed is my joy that the present translator, (a namesake of the Lord Himself) Sri N.V. Karthikeyanji has now rendered a signal service to the non-Tamil-knowing world by bringing into broad day-light, as it were, this lofty spiritual work of the highest order. This unique service is made even more valuable by the most excellent commentary in English upon each one of the verses that make up the work KANDARANUBHUTI.

The standard of the commentary is very high and bespeaks of the undoubtable spiritual status of the translator and commentator Sri N.V. Karthikeyan. He is known to me personally over these past ten years and I have observed

him to be a spiritually evolved soul who has the grace of God and our beloved Guru Maharaj Swami Sivanandaji. He has earned the deepest gratitude of the whole world by this unique spiritual service he has done by undertaking this English version of this mystical poem of Saint Arunagirinathar. During these past three years from 1969 onward 'The Divine Life' monthly journal has had its value greatly enhanced by the appearance in serial form of portions of this present work in regular instalments in each monthly issue of the above magazine of our Society. I have observed with great pride and satisfaction the distinctive spiritual progress and maturity of this sincere disciple of our worshipful Gurudev Sivanandaji Maharaj. While congratulating him upon this excellent work, I also prayerfully wish that the Lord may bestow upon him this same ANUBHUTI he has so well and ably explained through his very lucid and luminous commentary. May Lord Skanda reveal Himself to him in all His divine glory and grant him the bliss of Aparoksha Anubhuti in this very life!

I wish this most inspiring, revealing and invaluable work the widest circulation all over the world. May it be translated into many other foreign languages too and may countless earnest seekers be benefited thereby. I am happy to write these words and express my joy and appreciation. God's Grace be upon all Readers.

Om Sri Saravanabhavaya Namah!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Swami Chidananda". The signature is written in a fluid, cursive style with a long horizontal line extending from the left side of the word "Swami".

(SWAMI CHIDANANDA)

Sivananda Ashram,
Holy Skanda Shashthi Day,
26th October, 1971.

II

It is with deep satisfaction that I have gone through the exposition of one of the immortal works in religious literature,—Kandar Anubhuti of Saint Arunagirinathar,—presented by Sri Karthikeyan, whose earnestness of spirit and honesty of purpose in making this wisdom available to all seekers in the world I can personally vouchsafe due to a fairly long contact I had with him for years, as well as my observation of his fervour in things spiritual and his ardent longing for a Godly life of service, devotion and an immense goodness in dealing with issues in general. Such an author as this, ably fitted to share his thoughts on subjects concerning the profounder themes of the Spirit, should be regarded as one who is in a position to understand the psychological and practical processes of Sadhana which are mystically presented by Saint Arunagiri.

The present exposition is precisely the seeker's point of view, for that is really the right point of view which one has to adopt in treating of a spiritual text intended for catering to the needs of the soul of man. We are naturally more concerned with what we are at present than what we would be or ought to be in a purely idealistic sense. And what we are presently is a complex bundle of entanglements, passions, urges as well as aspirations. All these should indeed necessitate and call for a realistic approach to facts of the inner life of man, which will at once draw appeal from souls rather than personalities. From this assessment, it will be found that the Kandar Anubhuti, as commented on here in great detail, will be the most appropriate study-guide in daily life to all sincere Sadhakas who are struggling on the path to self-restraint and self-composure. Not only this. The work is a powerful aid in gaining access into the ideal realisation which awaits one in the end. It is thus a compendium combining in its compass a beautiful description of the *means*

of living a disciplined spiritual life as also of the *end* to be attained thereby,—the *summum bonum* of existence. May the work be ushered in for the release of beneficent forces throughout the world!

Swami Krishnananda

25th May, 1972.

(SWAMI KRISHNANANDA)

PREFACE

Lord Skanda shines in an absorbed mood in the small place of worship dedicated to Him in the Bhajan Hall of the Sivananda Ashram. Pilgrims and devotees, seekers and aspirants, poets and philosophers, saints and sages, Indians and foreigners constantly visit this holy Ashram of H.H. Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, for various purposes,—for Darsana, for spiritual solace, for learning Yoga and Vedanta, to study Indian culture and religion, etc. In the Bhajan Hall when they go round seeing the different Murtis and pictures, most of them,—especially those from the Northern part of India and from the Overseas countries,—are at a loss to know as to who this God is, when they see the *Murti* of Lord Skanda. And, when they are told that He is Lord Skanda or Karttikeya, their curiosity is all the more roused, for at the most what they know of Skanda is that He is the second son of Lord Siva, the younger brother of Sri Ganesa. Even this much is unknown to many. So they pose further: “Who is Skanda? May we know something about Him?”

In one of his *Tiruppugazh* songs, Saint Arunagiri says in one line: “*Koorum Adiyaargal Vinai Thiirkkum Mugam Onru*”—“One of the (six) faces (of Lord Skanda or Shanmukha) destroys the Karmas of those devotees who sing His praises.” Once an idea, therefore, came to my mind that I should sing His praises and thereby become a recipient of His grace, which act can at the same time give me an opportunity to make people know more of Lord Skanda. As most of the people who visit the Sivananda Ashram are English-knowing and as the Divine Life Society runs an English monthly entitled “The Divine Life”, I thought of contributing some articles about Lord Skanda in that journal towards the fulfilment of the above purpose. But I have a serious handicap. I myself do not know much about the

Lord except for what I have learnt from Sri Swami Sivanandaji's work "Lord Shanmukha and His Worship".

I have been and am doing daily Parayana or recitation of the *Kandar Anubhuti* of Saint Arunagiri since some years, though without knowing the meaning of the verses fully. Yet the hidden power of the work is such that it gave and continues to give me inner solace. During the course of the recitation of the *Kandar Anubhuti*, I found that the verses contain deep spiritual import, much more than what apparently appears on their surface. During these years of my stay in the Ashram, I and the other resident Sadhakas, Sannyasins and visitors had the rare privilege of listening to the highly illuminating, thoroughly scientific and searching expositions of Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj on Vedantic scriptures such as the Bhagavad Gita, Upanishads, etc. Listening to his lectures and the daily recitation of the *Kandar Anubhuti* revealed to me the fact that the verses of the *Kandar Anubhuti* contain the deep secrets of the Upanishads and other scriptures which were so impressively expounded by the Swamiji. I, therefore, thought that the best and easy way in which I can sing the glory of Lord Skanda is to try to write a commentary to Saint Arunagiri's "*Kandar Anubhuti*" in which I can bring out the Upanishadic teachings which it contains and at the same time expound the *Avatara*, *Lilas* and glory of Lord Skanda, wherever possible, as there is reference to the different aspects of the Lord and His achievements in most of the verses. Thus did I choose to render the *Kandar Anubhuti* into English with a short explanation of each verse and serialise it in the Society's monthly journal. However, I had no confidence about my capacity for the same and feared that if I am not in a position to deal with some verses, the serial will be affected. Hence, to be sure, I decided to prepare the whole manuscript, i.e., translation and a brief commentary, before commencing to publish it. And in this task, I encountered much difficulty due mainly to my own limitations,—I have lost touch with the Tamil language and literature immediately after my school education, 20 years back,—added to which were the

inherent difficulty of translation from one language to another, want of reference books and on the spot non-availability of men learned in the Tamil literature who can be consulted for guidance and clarification. Somehow, purely by the grace of God, the work of translation was completed. Being a beginner in the spiritual path, not acquainted with the scriptures either of the Tamil or Sanskrit language, and also the attempt being maiden, I was a bit diffident about the venture. Hence, with the manuscript, I approached and made a request to Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj,—whose ideas it is that are mostly made use of in the explanation of the verses,—who is also the Editor of the journal, to bestow his special attention in going through my articles and correct them suitably, to which he readily agreed and which he did with great care and patience even in the midst of his multifarious activities. I am immensely indebted to Sri Swami Krishnanandaji for all this kindness as also for the clarifications and guidance he gave me whenever I sought for the same.

Thus, the serialisation started in the March 1969 Issue of the Society's monthly journal "The Divine Life". This is the simple way in which this book, the "Kandar Anubhuti", had its birth. But Divine Will seems to have been different, with a purpose altogether different from that of mine.

In the process of translation of the verses, a kind of vague link of ideas between certain verses was visible on their very surface in a few places, for instance, in verses 12 and 13; 28 and 29; 33, 34 and 35; 42, 43 and 44; between 39 and 43, and 2 and 43; etc. This led me to think strongly that there should be a complete link of ideas running through the verses from the beginning to the end, like a golden thread, and that, if it is not apparently traceable on the surface, it should be hidden as the esoteric meaning. Though this feeling was very strong in me, I failed to arrive at any definite line of thought. I, therefore, expressed my feelings to a few Tamil-knowing devotees of Lord Murugan, who are also conversant with the Kandar Anubhuti, and sought their advice and help to solve my difficulty. They sincerely tried

to help me but the curious arrangement of the verses precluded us from arriving at any definite line of approach. And so their honest advice to me was to confine myself to mere translation and commentary, and not to bother myself with the esoteric significance as all my efforts in this direction would be futile. Though in my heart of hearts I was convinced that there must be and there is a golden thread hidden beneath and running through the verses, as per their sincere advice, I almost gave up the idea and started the serial in the March 1969 Issue of 'The Divine Life' without giving even a hint as to the possibility of there being an esoteric significance in the work. Hence, in conformity with the traditional view of almost all the commentators of the work, I said in the introduction to my serial, in that Issue, as follows:

"This work (Kandar Anubhuti) is said to be a collection of the poems independently sung by him (Saint Arunagiri) when he attained that blessed state of 'speechless communion'—poems that poured forth from him, revealing his different mental levels at the time of different experiences. Hence, one may not see much continuity in the ideas of the poems, that is, the ideas are independent and not closely connected."

Though I wrote as above, I was not satisfied because something was working in me in a subconscious way telling me that there is a grand purpose behind this unique work. The conviction that there must be a link of ideas between the verses was unerasable and it continued to work in a subtle way even in the midst of the daily activities. But, during my lonely evening walks, in the jungle path of the Himalayas behind the Ashram, this gained an upper hand and I could not help pondering over this deeply. In course of time I could somehow see a continuity upto verses 20. But the sudden fall of ideas and the weeping mood expressed in verses 21 and 29 after a grand rise in their previous verses acted as stumbling blocks. But, one day, during my *Parayana* of the Kandar Anubhuti a clue to the esoteric significance hidden in the verses 20 to 40 flashed into my mind

as I went on repeating each verse. I hurriedly scribbled these clues even while reciting the verses. The hurdle was thus overcome by the grace of Lord Skanda who would not allow me to rest satisfied unless His plan was fulfilled. A fairly coherent continuity of ideas was thus arrived at and I felt much relieved though not fully satisfied as it was only a clue to the esoteric meaning, on which I had to work out, develop and finalise. Anyhow, something was there to work upon and this gave confidence to launch on my task vigorously. And so in the May 1969 Issue of the journal, wherein verses 3 to 5 were being expounded, I gave a foot-note as follows, which would make my stand clear.

“The text of almost every verse appears to be so unconnected with the earlier and subsequent ones that the work, from this viewpoint, has been regarded by many as a collection of verses independently sung by the Saint at different times in accordance with the prevailing type of religious exaltation of his mind.

“As, however, the purpose of the Saint’s giving the work to the world is to help seekers attain that God-Experience which he had, we should strongly feel that there must be some inner link between the verses so as to provide the needed guidance to the seeker in his attainment. Hence, in this study of ours, we shall not only explain each verse as an independent one, with special reference to the Saint himself, but also try to see what instruction it has to give to the seeker, wherever possible. This latter, to distinguish it from the former, will be given in [] brackets at the end of each verse.”

From the above it should be clear that:

(a) The verses are interpreted in a twofold manner,—primarily with reference to the Saint himself, and secondly from the point of view of a seeker. This point has, therefore, to be borne in mind always, which will explain the difference, if any, in certain verses, between what is said in the explanation and in the bracketed [] portion, as the two are from two different standpoints.

(b) As what is tried to bring out in the [] matter is purely the esoteric significance of the verse, which is often deeply hidden in a single word, phrase or line, or even as the underlying idea of the verse, this matter may sometimes even appear to have no bearing with the apparent subject-matter of the verse, for instance as in verses 8, 12, 13, 28, 37, etc.

I should like to state one thing more here. Though I got a vague idea of the development of thought from verse to verse, it was neither clear-cut to me nor was I fully confident of developing them and giving a shape to them. Yet I ventured to publish them in [] with the above footnote, because even if I am not successful in my attempt, my view will be broadcast, at least, to the reading public, which will provide an incentive to others to think on this theme and evolve better ideas on similar or different lines. And this holds good even now. I do not claim that the esoteric significance discovered by me in the Kandar Anubhuti is perfect or final; it is subject to modification and further development or advice, which I would heartily welcome from any source.

Thus, each verse is rendered in the following manner:

a) First, a transliteration of the Tamil verse in Roman character. Diacritical marks not being available and due to the peculiar pronunciation-characteristics of the Tamil letters, no uniformity could be maintained in the transliteration. However, for the benefit of the Tamil-knowing readers, the original verses are included elsewhere. Here, too, the breaking of the words has been done not so much according to grammar but keeping in view the purpose—of easy reading,—and utility—easy understanding even while reading.

b) Second, the original Tamil verses being of four lines, a free-style translation in verse-form is given next,—the translation being line-by-line as much as possible and permissible, and as close to the original as could be.

c) Third, a translation of the verse in prose,—the

translation being as far as possible literal, and wherever necessary words being given within brackets to make the sense complete.

d) Fourth, a detailed commentary.

Here the verses are treated as almost independent and referring to Arunagiri himself. A rational approach based on Vedantic lines is attempted in explaining the implications.

Anecdotes, stories and references from the Skanda Purana are drawn as much as possible in the course of explanation of the different Names and Deeds of the Lord, referred to in the verse. This has been done for the specific purpose as mentioned, at the outset, in this Preface.

e) Last, the esoteric significance of the verse, given within [] bracket.

This is purely from the viewpoint of a struggling soul or seeker who is practising Sadhana with the sole object of attaining *Anubhuti* or Self-realisation. Hence, it is likely to differ from, and even appear to contradict in some places, what is stated in the explanation portion. Since the purpose of (d) and (e) is quite different, there should be no room to get confused between the two, though in many verses the esoteric significance given in [] bracket will be a development or conclusion of what is stated in the explanation of the verse.

While trying to understand the esoteric meaning of the verses, we would do well to remember that the Kandar Anubhuti was given by Arunagiri placing himself in the position of a Sadhaka. Hence, for the time being, one should forget that the verses are Arunagiri's, and feel that a Sadhaka, rather oneself, sings the verses. This will enable one to catch the spirit of the esoteric meaning.

In the beginning, I was not confident of successfully seeing through my theme of evolving the esoteric significance to the last. Hence the verses were explained as almost independent, with reference to the personal life of Arunagiri, and the esoteric significance was given at the end of

the explanation in [] brackets. There is, therefore, likely to be some difference between what is stated in the explanation and the []. This should, of course, be quite understandable, as the purpose of the two is totally different. Thus in the earlier verses more importance would be seen on their explanations as independent ones. But later on, with greater maturity and understanding of the esoteric significance, I gained more confidence and a firm conviction that the verses are closely related to each other and that they cannot be totally unrelated to one another. The thought that the work is a regular treatise possessed me so much that I could no more regard the verses as unconnected and independent, but only as a definite link in the chain of esoteric significance. Naturally, the explanation of the verses underwent a radical change, which could be seen in the latter half of the work, especially from verses 37 and onwards, whereon the explanation and the [] matter will have close resemblance, losing their distinctive characters and merging themselves into one another, as it were, which might not be the case in the earlier verses. Sometimes I even used to think that I should write another book interpreting and explaining the verses purely from the point of view of their esoteric significance, i.e., an exclusive commentary treating each verse as only a link in the chain of esoteric significance from a Sadhaka's point of view. Such is my conviction now regarding the work, though, of course, I felt many a time that I have taken up a job for which I am ill-equipped and which is beyond my capacity.

An Index has been appended at the end with a view to facilitate easy reference. Efforts have been made to make it exhaustive, though omission of words is not unlikely.

Finally I am immensely thankful and grateful to His Holiness Sri Swami Chidanandaji Maharaj and to His Holiness Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj, the President and General Secretary, respectively, of the Divine Life Society, for their forewords, which adorn the introductory pages of this book.

Sivananda Ashram

—N.V. Karthikeyan

THE NEED FOR AN ESOTERIC SIGNIFICANCE

Why should we at all seek to find an esoteric significance in the *Kandar Anubhuti*? Is it not enough if we study the verses as independent ones in their imports and not try to link the ideas from one to another? Such may be the doubts in the minds of many. Well, such a study would have been enough, but for the *purpose* of the work! Now, what is the purpose of the *Kandar Anubhuti*?

Saint Thayumanavar said:

*Kandar Anubhuti Petru Kandar Anubhuti Sonna
Enthai Arul Naadi Irukkum Naal Ennaalo?*

“When shall be that blessed day, when I shall get the grace of my (spiritual) father (Saint Arunagiri) who, obtaining *Anubhuti* or Direct Spiritual Experience of Lord Skanda, has sung (or given) (the work) *Kandar Anubhuti*?”

It is, therefore, beyond doubt and dispute that Arunagiri gave the work ‘*Kandar Anubhuti*’ *after* attaining *Anubhuti* or God-Experience. And, how can such a work contain verses which are of a curious nature? Being a work given after the attainment of God-Experience, can Arunagiri sigh, weep and lament over his helplessness in matters of sex, etc., as expressed in the following verses: “I am still caught up in the meshes of woman and family (verse 4); Even after uttering the Lord’s Name, I am not freed from the world-delusion or Jagan-Maya (verse 5); When shall I cease from the miserable plight of tossing, being caught up in the net of infatuation for women (verse 9); Not meditating on Thy Feet, should I totally perish of ignorance (verse 23); Wilt Thou think of showering Thy grace on me who (am so low as to) join the breasts of women (verse 24); etc., etc., (verses 25, 33, 34, 35, 39, 46, and 50). While he thus weeps before

the Lord in the Kandar Anubhuti, in his other work, *Kandar Alankaram*, which is regarded as given earlier than the Kandar Anubhuti, Arunagiri emphatically declares that he has, once and forever, crossed over this ocean of sexual lust, that he has overcome death, etc. Now when such is the fact, how are we to account for verses 4, 5, 10, etc.? Or, can we say that what Thayumanavar said of Arunagiri and the Kandar Anubhuti is untrue? When we ponder over this deeply and in an unbiased manner, we are driven to the necessity of accepting the fact that though Arunagiri depicts himself in these conditions, they cannot evidently refer to himself but to someone else in whose condition he places himself,—the condition of a seeker after Truth, or a Sadhaka. This gives a clue as to the *purpose* of the work, viz., to guide seekers attain that Blissful Experience which he himself was fortunate to enjoy. And we also know that it is an accepted fact that Saint Arunagiri, because of his compassion, gave the work to the world in order that everyone of us might enjoy the bliss of *Anubhuti*.

Thus, it is amply clear that the work is given primarily from a Sadhaka's view-point to help him attain God-Experience. Hence, it should, apart from revealing the Saint's own experiences, also contain instructions to guide an ordinary seeker to that Attainment. Now, this latter may be in two ways:

- (1) Either each and every verse, *by itself* and independently, gives a complete instruction on the attainment of *Anubhuti*, or each and every verse reveals the different aspects of the Saint's God-Experience, which would help seekers in their attainment. If all the verses fulfil this condition, the work may be regarded as a 'collection of verses dealing on *Anubhuti*', each revealing a different technique for the attainment of Divine Experience;

OR

- (2) the work, *as a whole*, forms an exposition of the path to *Anubhuti*.

A study of the work would, however, disclose that the verses are of a variegated nature, and that each and every verse cannot be said to give, by itself and independently, a complete instruction on *Anubhuti* or an aspect of the Saint's Experience, though certain verses do fulfil this. We would, therefore, be left with the second alternative, i.e., to regard the *work as a whole* as a treatise on *Anubhuti*.

Now, a treatise is a systematic exposition of a subject, and it should, therefore, have a clear link of ideas from verse to verse, leading one, step by step, to the pinnacle of Attainment. However, no such link which may be said to provide the needed guidance to seekers seems to obtain on the very surface of the verses; and that, if it is not apparently visible, it should be mystically hidden, is but natural. We should, therefore, strongly feel that there should be an esoteric meaning behind the verses, in addition to their independent import, so as to lead the seeker stage by stage till the attainment of the Grand Goal of God-Experience.

With the above background, let us examine the different views held about this work. It is the opinion of certain commentators that the '*Kandar Anubhuti*' is a collection of verses which were sung by Saint Arunagiri independently and *at different times* in accordance with the prevailing moods of his mind,—religious and spiritual exaltation of mind, disturbed condition of mind while in the process of Sadhana, prayerful moods to invoke God's grace to overcome weaknesses and obstacles, etc. It has been so held because the exoteric imports of the verses appear to be so unconnected from one another and express various moods that there can be no link whatsoever possible between them. Though it may be true that the verses do appear as unrelated to one another, this view is unacceptable; because, if the work is considered as merely a collection of unconnected verses, how is it going to fulfil its purpose of guiding others in attaining God-Experience? If it be argued that even as a mere collection, the work can help one attain God, we can as well say that any work can do it. What, then, is the speciality of this work? And, if there is nothing special and intrinsic in it, how can

we, with the same breath, say that the 'Kandar Anubhuti' is a unique work, almost without an equal to it on the subject? There must be something in it to deserve its claim. Hence, we cannot but strongly feel that the work, even if it be a collection, has to be a meaningful, thoughtful and purposeful collection, and not a haphazard or at random collection without any coherence of thought. This should specially be so, as the work is an original one, that is, the 'Kandar Anubhuti' is the Saint's own composition,—the title of the work, the arrangement of the order of the verses, etc., were Arunagiri's own, and not done by someone else either during or after his lifetime.

Moreover, the treatise cannot be said to contain verses which were sung by the Saint before attaining *Anubhuti*, as it would contradict Saint Thayumanavar's declaration of it.

Another view held, which is a little bit amusing, is that the Arunagiri-parrot perched on a pipal tree somewhere near Tiruvannamalai, wrote the poems on the pipal leaves and dropped them. Those leaves were collected and that collection is *Kandar Anubhuti*. Hence the verses are jumbled and no sequence of thought is to be found in the work. Though, as an imagination of some fertile brain, this view is praiseworthy, it appears to be far from truth and does not stand even to simple reason. If the parrot can write the verses on leaves with its beak and keep them till their completion, it could have very well brought them down and kept the leaves in tact. Again, when the scattered leaves are collected, if the *Kaappu* verse and the first verse which contains a Mantra in the first line because of which the work is extolled, can be in order, why not the other verses? And, above all, if we can believe and accept that the parrot wrote the verses, would it not be more reasonable and can we not be charitable enough to accept that the numbering of the verses was also done by the parrot?

It has been held by certain others that the 'Kandar-Anubhuti' is a work of 'praise-songs' (*Stotras*) and that such works do not, like the *Sastras*, have a subject or theme to deal

with or give instruction upon in a systematic way. Well, this view also seems to be right from its own standpoint, because most of the verses (but not all) are in the form of praise and prayer. But then it falls short of 'the purpose', for reasons already stated. If it is to fulfil its purpose of helping others in attaining God-Experience, it cannot be said to comprise of mere praise-songs; because there are a number of such praise-song works, but they are not regarded as works on the attainment of *Anubhuti* and are not accorded an equal status with the 'Kandar Anubhuti'. The 'Kandar Anubhuti' is regarded as unparalleled on the subject. What, then, entitles this work to such an exalted position, if not something intrinsic in it? Moreover, the 'Kandar Anubhuti' is regarded as a *Mantra-Sastra* and not a *Stotra*.

All these views are the outcome of the single factor, viz., our inability to see any concatenation of ideas in the verses of the 'Kandar Anubhuti', which has even led certain people to go to such extremes as to suggest that the order of the verses needs a rearrangement, though they find it difficult, nay, impossible, to do it in a satisfactory manner in whatever way they rearrange. The fact is that it is already in order, because it is a divine gift. What rearrangement can be made in that which is in order? As the treatise has come down to us for over five centuries accepted and unaltered by great souls like Thayumanavar and others who have extolled it, it would be unwise on anyone's part to suggest or to try to rearrange the verses, even for study's sake. It would be wiser to accept our inability to see a logical sequence of ideas in the verses, or even try to seek a remote and far-fetched link, than to meddle with the work.

Yet some others are of the opinion that the Saint had for long cherished a pious wish to offer a 'Poem Garland' to the Lord, as expressed in his Tiruppugazh '*Aasaikoor Bhaktanen.....*', and that the 'Kandar Anubhuti' is a composition in fulfilment of this wish of his. This appears to be a more satisfactory one.

Now, let us see what that wish is, which he expressed

in the above Tiruppugazh song. A free translation of it would read thus:

"I am a devotee with a (peculiar) desire,—to offer a garland to the Lord. What kind of Garland? A garland of poems having the flower of the mind-lotus, being penetrated by the thread of love, artistically composed by the tongue, wafting its wisdom-fragrance, shining in all its glory, and the bee of the intellects of the taintless ones (Sadhus) rejoicing in it,—such a '*Maatrukaa Pushpa Maalai*' (poem-garland) shall I be blessed to offer at Your coral-like Feet".

"*Maatrukaa Pushpa Maalai*" is a treatise of verses with the 51 letters, of the Sanskrit language, from 'A' to 'Ksha'. It is also called '*Akshara Maalai*', i.e., garland of letters; *Akshara* meaning letter. '*Maatrukaa Pushpa Maalai*' is also said to mean a treatise of 51 verses, because of the mere correspondence in number.

The essential points of the Tiruppugazh are these: It is a garland of poems, having for its flower the mind-lotus, and it is to be offered at the Feet of the Lord. The mind is another name for the *Jiva*, and the Feet of the Lord usually denote *Paramapada* or the Supreme Abode. Thus to offer the mind-lotus to the Feet of the Lord means to offer the *Jiva* in the Supreme Being, i.e., to attain *Atmasakshatkara*.

The garland is to be offered at the feet. Therefore the purpose of it is not to adorn the Lord or glorify Him, for, if that were its purpose, it would be offered on His shoulders and chest. As it is to be offered at the Lord's Feet, its purpose is specific and clear,—to offer the *Jiva* in God. This is the essential point of the Tiruppugazh.

By whom is it to be offered? By one who is a devotee (*Bhaktan*), and that too by one who has a great aspiration to attain the Lord (*Aasaikoor Bhaktan*). '*Aasai*' here is not desire in the worldly sense; it is the desire or aspiration for attaining God because it is of a devotee, and what else could the desire of a true devotee be than a longing to attain the

Feet of the Lord? It is the spiritual aspiration of man for communion with God, of the soul to merge in Brahman.

The garland is to be penetrated by a thread,—the thread of love, Bhakti or devotion. The thread is invisible but is essential for the garland. So is devotion to God in the life of an aspirant, which keeps the various aspects of his being tethered to God. It is to be artistically or beautifully knit. Where? In the tongue. How? By a devout singing of it.

The scent of Wisdom should emanate from the garland, and also it should shine with different colours. While the colour attracts the eyes, the scent captivates one through the nose. The eye and the nose stand for all the senses. Further, the garland is to be laden with high spiritual truths on which the bees of the intellects of the faultless ones can contemplate, meditate and rejoice.

All this description is to indicate that while one's tongue recites the verses, there should surge forth pure devotion in the heart, the senses should be kept captivated by them, the intellect should contemplate on the wisdom contained in them,—which is the essence of the life of a Sadhaka,—to effect an inner sublimation and transformation of all the faculties of the Sadhaka and be absorbed in God.

Thus is (the garland of) the Jiva,—the Jiva in all its aspects i.e., the aspiration, the mind, devotion (heart), the senses (tongue, eyes, nose, etc.), the purified intellect and wisdom—to be offered at the Feet of the Lord.

This view, viz., that the Kandar Anubhuti is the 'Maatrukaa Pushpa Maalai' which Arunagiri aspired to offer to Lord Skanda, appears to be a better one and also correct, because the Kandar Anubhuti is a work of 51 verses and also Arunagiri himself refers to it, in the Kaappu-verse, as "a *garland* knit of the beautiful words (of Tamil)"—"Senchor Pūnai Maalai". Most probably, Arunagiri, by this succinct phrase, means the 'Maatrukaa Pushpa Maalai' and all that he has said about it in the above Tiruppugazh. And we have seen the essential points of it, viz., that it is for the purpose of offering the seeking soul, which is full of devotion to

God, in God-Experience. This is also corroborated by the title of the work, viz., 'Kandar Anubhuti'. Even if the Kandar Anubhuti is not accepted as the direct fulfilment of the wish of the above Tiruppugazh, yet the fact remains that it is a word-garland as declared in the Kaappu-verse; and the purpose and constituents of a garland are, of course, the same.

Thus, if we are to accept that the title and arrangement of verses of the Kandar Anubhuti are Saint Arunagiri's own, and that his purpose in giving the treatise is to help seeking souls in their attainment of God; if we are to do full justification to the title, 'Kandar Anubhuti'; if we are to give due respect to Thayumanava Swamigal's tribute to the Kandar Anubhuti, viz., that it is a work given *after* attaining Divine Experience; and if we are to regard the work as a 'word-garland' (all which we cannot but accept), (whether it is accepted as the 'Maatrukaa Pushpa Maalai' referred to in the Tiruppugazh or not), we have every reason to strongly feel that the work should have an esoteric significance, over and above the independent import and worth of each verse, because mere praise-songs or a collection of verses, and that too unconnected with one another in their exoteric import, cannot help one attain God-Experience which is a gradual process of unfoldment, and not an easy thing to be attained. *Anubhuti* is had as a result of *Abhyasa*; a graduated practice based on profound understanding leads to perfection. This is what marks out the Kandar Anubhuti as distinct from all other works, not only of others but even of Saint Arunagiri himself. Thiruppugazh songs, Kandar-Alankaram, etc., may be meant for mere recitation and they may be regarded as *Stuti* or praise-songs, though with spiritual import, but not the Kandar Anubhuti; because mere recitation cannot be expected to lead one to Anubhuti or actual God-Experience. It demands a systematic practice, with understanding, and that is what is expounded in this rare work. We would not be wrong, I feel, if we interpret the title 'Kandar Anubhuti' as (1) 'God-Experience', as also (2) 'the practice that leads to God-Experience'.

We also find that there is no uniformity in the verses, i.e., all verses are not of the same type, in the sense that not all are in the form of prayer, or appeal, or revelation of spiritual experience, or instruction, or admonition, etc. There are verses which touch and kindle the emotions; which express repentance, anxiety and prayer; which exclaim one's gratitude over the special blessings conferred; which give specific and clear-cut instructions to follow; which reveal great wisdom and secret clues to higher experiences, etc., etc. Not only this; these verses of different types are curiously interspersed, so to say. This gives the clue and suggestion that it should be a regular treatise on God-attainment, since there is a need for all these elements in such a work, as an aspirant will pass through varying mental states and experiences in the course of his practices. (This is also a reason against any attempt to rearrange the verses subject-wise). The order of the verses is so calculatedly arranged (though it appears to be jumbled, on account of which the work is regarded as a collection) that the import or subject of each verse will give the needed instruction to the seeker, or reveal his inner experience, or invoke the Lord's grace, etc., as would be appropriate to the stage in which he is at the particular verse. The order of the verses is designed to give out the desired expression to the condition of the seeker at every stage, through the particular verse. One or the other of the elements mentioned in the Tiruppugazh '*Asaikoor Bhaktanen.....*' can be seen to be appropriately reflected in this or that verse of the '*Kandar-Anubhuti*', which fact would also go to prove that the work may be a fulfilment of the prayer of that Tiruppugazh.

In all probability it is most likely that the '*Kandar Anubhuti*' might have been given by the Saint as the last of his works. In the Tiruppugazh and his other works, Arunagiri has said everything everywhere. As a result of reciting his Tiruppugazh and other works, a distaste for worldly pursuits and an aspiration to attain God might arise in a

person, and he would like to practise some Sadhana to have God-Experience, but would be at a loss to know what to do. Arunagiri might have, therefore, thought that a treatise on the attainment of God-Experience (*Anubhuti*) would be a help to such seekers, and the Kandar Anubhuti is the outcome.

Thus we may regard the Kandar Anubhuti as the crowning glory of Saint Arunagiri's works, though each other work of his has a purpose, speciality and charm of its own. All the works of Arunagiri put together may be regarded as the 'Arunagiri-Veda' of which the Kandar Anubhuti would form the 'Anubhuti-Upanishad'. It is the culminating and the wisdom-portion of his works. The 51 verses of the Kandar Anubhuti are verily 51 Mantras, like the Upanishadic Mantras,—so concise, so pithy and so brevity-filled, with many secret clues to higher meditation and experience. We can say without the least hesitation that the treatise fulfils the purpose of an Upanishad, remarkably. Truly it is a *Mantra-Sastra*.

Now, why should the instructions be esoteric, or why should the Saint not have explicitly given it in the verses, may be a doubt. This is the general practice, with a reason, of course. Spiritual truths are kept as secrets, because, if they are given to unprepared minds, they are liable to be misunderstood, misinterpreted and misrepresented. They are always kept hidden; they have to be obtained with great effort and it demands certain prerequisites. As the work is liable to go into the hands of any and everyone, the esoteric meanings are hidden far beyond the ordinary reach. And here is the need for the poems to be in prayer or praise form, and in the first person. When a devotee or seeker, though initially unprepared, goes on with *Svadyaya* or a devout and faithful recitation of the verses, they, being in the first person and the wordings so powerful and calculated, are capable of raising his mind gradually and inducing the necessary *Bhava* or inner feeling in the seeker so as to get attuned to the feeling with which the Saint sang the verses, or which

he intends to convey through the particular verse. When we recite the verses, it is as if the Saint himself is reciting them through us. We get attuned to his mind and the needed feeling is bound to be evoked in us. Thus the inner secrets get revealed from within, in course of time. They are not supposed to be openly said in the verses, nor can they be understood even if said; they are to be 'revealed'. Hard-earned wealth is valued and preserved. So is wisdom.

Now, a word about the esoteric significance in the verses, which is not easily obtainable from them. In a few groups of verses the continuity of ideas is apparent, and can be seen almost on the surface. In fact, it is this that made me feel that there should be such a link of ideas in the other verses, i.e., in the work as a whole, and that if it is not apparent, it should be secretly hidden. In some it is lodged in a line or phrase of the verse; in some the meaning is implied in a word; and in some it lies far beneath, as the very *spirit* underlying the verse as a whole, and gets revealed only as one goes on with the repetition of the verse, over and over again. Thus is the need for Svadhyaya or a regular and systematic chanting of the verses, daily, with love and surrender to God, when more truths than what is written in any book, including this one, are revealed in the heart of the seeker. This is the case not only with the Kandar Anubhuti but every work of this category.

This esoteric significance, which is mostly based on what has been revealed to me by the Lord in the course of my daily Parayana, I offer unto men of learning, wisdom and experience, in whose hearts Lord Guhan specially resides, for their research and acceptance of what is worthwhile in it and to ignore the shortcomings in it, which are due to my limitations.

A Synopsis of the Esoteric Significance

One may be curious to know what the esoteric significance is that runs through the verses. Though for a correct

appreciation of the full implications of the esoteric significance of the verses a thorough-going study of the book is necessary, we may here have a synopsis just to have an inkling of the esoteric meaning. Grouping of the verses has been made and heading given just for the sake of convenience and easy remembrance.

I—THE BEGINNING OF SADHANA (VERSES 1 TO 3)

“Kandar Anubhuti” means actual God-Experience. It is not mere praise of God, not mere glorification of His greatness, but something more than all this; it is *Experience*. Hence it is a treatise on practice. Thus, from the very beginning, it contains instructions on a practical spiritual living, on Sadhana, the obstacles that would be encountered in the different stages of practice and the methods of overcoming them at every stage, culminating in the grand experience of God.

An introduction into a life of Sadhana is, therefore, made in the first verse itself, by way of taking to an unceasing practice of Japa or Namasmarana. That the treatise is meant for whole-souled aspirants or seekers who are dedicated to the practice of Sadhana to attain God is implied in the prayer ‘*Paadum Paniye Paniyaai Arulvaai*,— the *only task* of singing His glories or repeating His Names. For any practice to be successful, it is essential to have a clear concept of the ideal, its nature and method of attainment, right at the outset; these are shown in verses 2 and 3.

II—COMING TO BRASS TACKS AND THE BEGINNING OF THE DESCENT OF DIVINE GRACE (VERSES 4 TO 13)

When actual Sadhana is commenced, the practitioner comes across certain difficulties. The life of the Sadhaka is one of a gradual unfoldment of the Divinity within, which also implies the overcoming of obstacles, in stages. When one obstacle is overcome, another obstacle which is more powerful and subtle will present itself, demanding more effort and a greater surrender to the Divine. This goes on until the final Goal is reached. A little practice is not enough

to overcome the obstacles. Great effort, coupled with Divine Grace, is called forth to overcome the problems, in stages.

The gross obstacles present themselves in the beginning; the external circumstances in the form of wife and children are the first to be encountered (verses 4 and 5). The difficulty is realised, and, as a result of purification of heart through intense Prayer (verse 6), and charity and contemplation (verse 7), the seeker gets from God a personal Guru, as the first and visible form of help, in which form God's Grace manifests itself, though the seeker might not realise it immediately (verse 8). Thus are verses 4 to 8.

Verses 9 and 10 depict a peculiar difficulty of the Sadhaka, of transition from the outer to the inner difficulty, while verses 11 to 13 show the descent of a greater amount of Divine grace;—the Guru gives a temporary state of the Divine Experience to provide the needed conviction to march forward, boldly.

III—PREPARATION FOR AND INITIATION INTO MEDITATION (VERSES 14 TO 20)

With the special grace granted by the Guru, the Sadhaka makes an earnest effort to put forth necessary Sadhana to attain the Goal. He aspires to acquire freedom from the externalising tendency of the mind by fixing it on the Lord, or the Self within (verse 14), through intensification of Nama-Japa and a melting of the heart (verse 15) and a discriminative understanding (Viveka) (verses 16 and 17) which form the prerequisites for initiation into meditation proper. He then attempts at meditation on the Self but feels the need for initiation into its technique (verses 18 and 19), and beseeches the Guru for the same, who initiates him into the mysterious process of inner meditation on the Self (verse 20).

IV—THE INNER STRUGGLE AND A GLIMPSE (VERSES 21 TO 28)

Now comes the difficult task of the Sadhaka. When meditation proper is commenced, the subtle, inner personality

(Avidya in the form of Samskaras and Vasanas) comes up to the surface with its ugly face. Meditation is then no easy joke and demands persistent and ever-increasing diving within, which brings a simultaneous realisation of the unreal nature of the phenomenal world and a corresponding insight into Reality.

With the power of initiation, the seeker's aspiration for liberation is intensified (verse 21). The group of verses from 22 to 26 vividly portray the inner transformation that takes place in the Sadhaka when he plunges into meditation and the various experiences that the mind undergoes.

A close observation of the verses will reveal the critical condition of the Sadhaka's mind—meditation now appearing to be easy (verse 22) and now impossible because of the active play of Avidya (verse 23), demanding a greater and greater resort to the Self and a total dependence on it (verses 24 to 27), until it is successful and the mind gets a glimpse of Cosmic Consciousness (verse 28).

V—THE INDESCRIBABLE CONDITION (VERSES 29 TO 32)

The touching of the fringe of Cosmic Consciousness and the subsequent need to return to and live in this 'unreal' world (verse 29), places the Sadhaka in an indescribable predicament—sometimes he is able to reconcile things (verse 30) and sometimes not (verse 31). God appears to be an admixture of kindness and cruelty; the working of Divine Grace and Prarabdha are experienced together.

VI—THE ALL-CONSUMING ASPIRATION AND THE FINAL PUSH (VERSES 33 TO 38)

This peculiar condition of the Sadhaka creates such a spiritual unrest in him that he longs to get a total freedom from Samsara by plunging into uninterrupted meditation, which wells up as an all-consuming aspiration for a total renunciation (verses 33 to 35).

He longs for and gets initiated into the highest mystical type of meditation on Pranava or 'Om' (Sannyasa), and

thus gets ready to bid good-bye to the phenomenal world (verses 36 to 38).

VII—THE FINAL JUMP AND GOD-EXPERIENCE (VERSES 39 TO 43)

Having equipped himself with all that is necessary for a leap into the Absolute, a resolute and all-out effort is made to break the bonds of the causal chain and enter into the Grand-Experience (verse 39). Uninterrupted meditation on the Absolute is undertaken (verse 40) with a longing to attain liberation here and now, i.e., Jivanmukti (verse 41), and this rends asunder the tree of Samsara, root and branch. Self-effort and Divine Grace fuse together and give birth to 'Speechless Experience', when the knots of the heart are broken forever (verses 42 and 43). Man meets God and becomes a God-man, a Jivanmukta Purusha. Verses 39 to 43 are thrilling and stimulating, as the climax of the treatise is reached here.

VIII—LOKASANGRAHA (VERSES 44 TO 50)

With the attainment of God-Experience, the Sadhaka becomes a Siddha Purusha, or a Jivanmukta Purusha, or a Sage, and there is no more need for him to do any Sadhana. His very existence, and all his activities, are verily Sadhana.

The liberated soul who attains to the state of 'Speechless-Experience' (*Pesaa Anubhuti*) does not usually remain absorbed in it but rises from it and moves about freely as a Jivanmukta. Verse 44 depicts the experience of a Jivanmukta immediately on rising from *Pesaa Anubhuti*, i.e., that of his feeling the presence of God everywhere.

The Jivanmukta has a Divine mission to fulfil, that of helping the aspirants. The freed soul, therefore, moves about freely without any let or go, giving spiritual instruction to those that seek his guidance. The instructions and their methods naturally vary in accordance with the needs of those that seek. Hence there is no

need for a continuity in the ideas of verses 45 to 50, which, of course, reveal high spiritual truths. They convey deep meaning and contain secret clues for meditation; they have significance and purpose; they provide valuable guidance to seekers. Hence these are of a special type.

IX—SAHAJA-SAMADHI AVASTHA (VERSE 51)

Though he moves about distributing peace and happiness to all, he maintains an inner awareness of God always, with which he gets so much intoxicated that THAT EXPERIENCE becomes *Sahaja* or natural to him. This is called *Sahaja-Avastha*, i.e., a perpetual and natural Superconscious state, wherein he beholds the Lord within and without, simultaneously,—within as the Self (as Guhan), and without as all that is visible and invisible, conceivable and unconceivable, as matter and spirit, and as the Guru. This is the condition of the Jivanmukta to whom the world clings for succour, in whom everyone finds solace, to whom seeking souls flock for spiritual illumination, and for whom nothing makes any difference.

May the blessings of all such Brahmanishthas guide the seekers all over the world!

LIFE OF SAINT ARUNAGIRINATHAR

The *Kaumaras*, or those who regard and worship Lord Kumara, Skanda, Shanmukha or Karttikeya as the Supreme Being, are one of the six sects of the Hindus. And Saint Arunagiri is revered as one of the foremost among the *Acharyas* or Spiritual Teachers of the Kaumaras. He lived at Tiruvannamalai, the *Agni Kshetra*,—one of the *Pancha Bhuta Sthalas*, which is sacred and famous for many other reasons as well.

As with the case with most of the saints and sages of the past, no authentic record of Arunagiri's life is available. Nothing definite is known about his birth, caste, etc. This has naturally led to much speculation about his life. And today we have a number of versions of Arunagiri's life and that too with countless variations in minor details. When one goes through them, one is at a loss to know which is right and which is not. The more one reads, the more confusion is created in one's mind. I say confusion because different authors say different things without any source, basis or authority, except their love for the Lord and the Saint. Even the few books that I could obtain and go through made me feel that I better leave this subject (i.e., the life of Arunagiri) untouched, lest I should add to the confusion which is already there enough. But, at the same time, I could not help writing something about his life, as I felt the book would be incomplete without the illustrious Saint's life, especially this being the only English rendering of the *Kandar Anubhuti*. Hence I have tried here to collect and consolidate only those versions which have some reliable source under three heads,—the traditional account, the historical account and the internal evidence account—with, of course, some stress on the view that appeals to me as more intelligible, reasonable

and supported by some kind of evidence, and I leave it to the readers to take what appeals to them. Whatever it be, one thing is certain that Arunagiri was a saint of no ordinary attainment as could be assessed from a study of his different works.

The Traditional Account

This has come down to us through generations by way of hearsay. This is mostly based on the earliest written poetic-work on the life of Arunagiri, entitled the "*Arunagirinatha Swamigal Puranam*" by a saintly Swami, called Thandapani Swamigal (who also goes by the names of Murugadasa Swamigal and Tiruppugazh Swamigal —1839-1898) composed about the year 1865. It is as follows:

Arunagiri was born in Tiruvannamalai, Tamilnadu, and is believed to have lived sometime in the middle of the fifteenth century A.D. He was the son of a *Daasi* (a dancing-girl) called Muthu and had an elder sister by name Adi. It is also said that he was born to Muthu from the famous mystic saint of Tamilnadu, Pattinathar by name, in an unusual manner.

When the boy attained the age of five, he was put to school. At his seventh year of age, his mother passed away. She loved the boy so much that while she was in the death-bed, she entrusted him to the care of her daughter (i.e., the elder sister of Arunagiri) with specific instructions not to do anything that would displease him. Arunagiri's sister understood the anxious mental condition of her mother and gave her a word of promise that she would leave nothing undone to please Arunagiri and keep him happy.

As Arunagiri grew in age, he found the company of women more pleasing than his studies which he virtually neglected and sought the pleasures of enchanting courtesans. Slowly, he became a confirmed debauch. His sister who came to know of this conduct of Arunagiri tried her best to extricate him from the traps of public women. But nothing could prevent Arunagiri from his infatuated love for women.

He must have his ways at any cost. The poor sister could not do anything drastic, lest she should be harsh to Arunagiri or displease him, which would mean breaking her promise to her mother. Thus did Arunagiri indulge in sex heedlessly and depleted all the wealth hoarded by his mother. Slowly he began to snatch away, one by one, the ornaments of his sister, sometimes with her knowledge and sometimes otherwise. The helpless lady could do nothing except pray to the Lord to save Arunagiri. In the meantime, Arunagiri contracted many diseases and suffered much. Yet he would not learn a lesson. He squandered all his sister's wherewithal and left her a complete pauper. But he would yet demand money from her to satisfy his sexual appetite and if she pleaded helplessness, he would threaten her of sinking before her very eyes. In spite of her being reduced to this most pitiable condition, she could not imagine of displeasing Arunagiri. But, now she was utterly helpless. She grew desparate and said: "Brother! I had been helping you with all that I had. But now I find no means to help you. Yet I cannot think of displeasing you. Brother, tell me what can I do? Well, only one means is left now. Though we are born of the same mother, our fathers are different. Hence, the pleasure that you seek from a woman, you can find with me!" She would have continued, but her throat choked; she became silent. Lo! these words entered Arunagiri's heart like sharp arrows and shook his very being so fundamentally that he repented with a contrite heart for all his past misdeeds and wept bitterly. And in a moment he decided to put an end to his life as an expiation for all the sins committed by him. Before his sister could understand as to what was happening to Arunagiri, he ran posthaste, climbed the tower of the Arunachala Temple, repented with an honest feeling, cried aloud the Name of the Lord, "Muruga, Muruga, Muruga", and jumped down, to put an end to his miserable existence and thereby be freed from sins.

Who can understand the ways of the Lord! Ere Arunagiri fell on the ground, there stood the Lord with his outstretched hands and held him in His warm embrace. Yet,

Arunagiri knew not anything. With His *Vel*, the Lord wrote His sacred Mantra on Arunagiri's tongue, gave him a Japa Mala and commanded him to sing His glories. Arunagiri hesitated. The Lord Himself then gave the first line, as:

Muttait Taru Pattit Tirunagai

Attikkirai Sattich Saravana

Muttik Koru Vittug Gurupara—Ena Odhu

“With smile-divine and teeth pearl-like set, O Moksha-
conferring

Deivayanai's Lord! O Saravanabhava, Sakti-Vel holding!

O Guru Supreme! O Seed (Source) for Moksha gaining!

—Thus sing.”

The Lord then disappeared. Arunagiri stood there totally transformed. He adopted the life of a renunciate. The erstwhile sinner shone now as a saint. His body was cured of all its diseases; his mind was purged of all impurities; his heart was brimming with devotion and he was in a highly ecstatic mood. Arunagiri, having now got the complete grace and command of the Lord, at once completed the song. He was full of expression, love and supreme devotion. As the waters of a reservoir rush forth when the flood-gate is thrown open, wisdom and love flowed through the Saint in the form of *Tiruppugazh* songs. He went from tower to tower of the Arunachaleswarar Temple and poured forth poems in exquisite Tamil. He then went round the streets of Tiruvannamalai, singing the glories of the Lord in diverse ways. He was God-intoxicated out and out, and started on a pilgrimage to all holy places, singing the ‘Glory of God’ (*Tiruppugazh*), wherever he went, enjoying various kinds of divine experience at different places.

The Historical Account

In his work “*Sasana Tamizhk Kavi Charitam*”, Rao Sahab M. Raghava Iyengar, has given a detailed account of his researches, with appropriate authorities, based on certain Sanskrit works and inscriptions around Tiruvannamalai which reveal many interesting facts about the early life of Aruna-

giri. The salient features of his research may be summarised as follows:

It is almost an accepted fact that Arunagiri belonged to the time of Villiputturar, the author of the Tamil Mahabharatam. Villiputturar lived during the same time as the *Irattaiyar* (the twin-poets) whose period is the middle of the 14th century.

Arunagiri, in his Tiruppugazh, refers to two persons,— (1) a king who ruled during his time, as Pravudadeva Maharaja; and (2) the head of a Mutt, as Somanathan. Based on Arunagiri's description of the political condition prevailing then, it can be assumed that the king referred to by him should be Pravudadeva Raya II who ruled during the earlier part of the 15th century. As regards the time of Somanathan, he is believed to have lived about 1370 A.D., based on an inscription in the wall of the Siva Temple at Puttur. It is also ascertainable that the said Somanathan was one of the foremost among the Sivacharyas,—learned Vidvans and Gowda-Brahmins,—who came from North India and settled at Mullandiram and Devikapuram sometime earlier. Considering the above data, the author concludes that Arunagiri's time should be between that of Pravudadeva and Somanathan, i.e., between the close of the 14th century and the beginning of the 15th century.

From other inscriptions it is learnt that from amongst these Gowda Brahmin scholars and Pandits, some were talented Sanskrit poets and were called as "Dindima Kavis". Historians* hold that our Arunagiri is a descendent of these Dindima Kavis and he is himself referred to as such in one of the Sanskrit works of his posterior, entitled *Saluvabhyudayam*, who says that his father, Arunagirinathar by name, was a "Sarva-Bhauma Dindima Kavi", an "Ashtabhasha Paramesvara", a past master in composing Chitra Prabandha, and one greatly revered by the three Tamil kings, Chera,

* Most prominent among them being the late Sri T.A. Gopinatha Rao who has published a lengthy article in the 'Indian Antiquary' of 1918.

Chola and Pandya. Sri Raghava Iyengar proves, from internal evidences and coincidence of time, place, etc., that the Arunagirinathar referred to in the above Sanskrit work is our Arunagiri, the author of Tiruppugazh, etc., works.

Further, there is an inscription of 1550 A.D. in the Siva Temple of Mullandiram which records the gift of a piece of land by a Brahmin lady to erect a small altar to 'Annamalai Natha' inside that Siva temple. This lady is said to be a descendent of the Dindima Kavi Annamalai Natha. It is believed that the Annamalai Natha in whose memory the altar was built is our Arunagiri, because Arunagiri, being a divine-inspired poet and saintly soul of an extraordinary calibre, became so famous that many temples came to be dedicated to him and one of his descendants donated for one such in his very birth place, Mullandiram. From all these it is proved and held that Arunagiri belonged to a Brahmin family of Mullandiram near Tiruvannamalai.

One objection to this view is: though Arunagiri is referred as Dindima Kavi, etc. in the Sanskrit work of his son (to which facts there are corresponding internal evidences in the works of Arunagiri), Arunagiri's greatness was not so much due to these factors but was due to his extraordinary devotion to Lord Murugan and his innumerable compositions of Tiruppugazh songs, to which there is no mention in the Sanskrit work. This objection does not seem to be a serious one because when a person is referred to, all aspects of his life need not necessarily be mentioned. So long as the facts mentioned about Arunagiri in the Sanskrit works do not contradict any of the facts available about him, it can be safely taken as authentic, for no description of a person can be complete. That he was an expert in composing as a Chitra Kavi, that he was a Dindima Kavi and that he was revered and worshipped by the three kings,—all which are fully relevant to Arunagiri,—are facts which can be substantiated from his Tiruppugazh and other works. Again, if all these do not refer to our Arunagiri, who is he that is referred to by these? There seems to be no one else

of that period to whom all these can be attributed. To simply say that these do not refer to our Arunagiri would be a meaningless objection unless the existence of another person to whom these refer can be proved. It cannot be that someone else was, who was such a great poet as to be called as Dindima Kavi, expert in composing poems as a Chitra Kavi and worshipped by the great Tamil kings and yet whose name or life-history or any of his works is not available on record. If these were really to refer to such a great person other than Arunagiri, something about him or at least some of his works must be available for reference, somewhere. Hence, in the absence of any such thing as this, these details may be taken, in all probability, to refer to Arunagiri, the author of Tiruppugazh and other works, and it can be safely regarded as such.

The Internal Evidence Account

This is based on Rao Bahadur V.S. Chengalvaraya Pillai's Tamil work "*Arunagirinathar: Varalaarum Nool-aaraychiyum*"—"Arunagirinathar: Life and research on his works", published in the year 1947. Our revered and scholarly Pillai Avl. has done a tremendous work, a novel and original thought of his, in codifying the "Murugavel Panniru Tirumurai" corresponding to the 'Saiva Panniru Tirumurai', for which we are indebted to him. According to his research based on internal evidences of the Tiruppugazh and other works of Arunagiri, the life of the Saint, in his above work, is thus:

Apart from the fact that Arunagiri lived in Tiruvannamalai during the time of Pravuda Deva Maharaja who ruled that territory in 1450 A.D., no internal evidences are available as to say anything definite about Arunagiri's caste, his parents, and his early life.

Arunagiri was acquainted, even from his boyhood, with the earlier Tamil works, such as the Tevaram, Tirumantiram, Tirumurugaatruppada, Tirukkural, etc. He had the skill and capacity to compose poems and he was a devotee of Lord Murugan.

As fate would have it, he fell a victim to the evil traits of courtesans and lost all his property in debauchery. Utilising his talents of composing extempore songs, he earned wealth only to please his paramours. He was finally overpowered by poverty and many fell diseases took heavy toll of him, and he felt ashamed over his own plight.

Realising his condition and also the meritorious deeds of his earlier lives, an elderly pious person appeared before Arunagiri and advised him to do penance and contemplate on the six-faced Lord, Shanmukha. But, he paid no heed to this saintly instruction and wasted his life for some more time, only to be ridiculed by his kinsmen and townsmen.

But, time is a great healer. The time for fruition of his past meritorious deeds approached and his mental attitude, too, underwent a change. He repented for his ill-spent life and for not having acted up to the advice of the pious person. He, therefore, offered up a prayer to Lord Murugan, sat near the big tower (Gopuram) of the Arunachaleswarar Temple at Tiruvannamalai and commenced Sadhana in right earnest, but to no effect. He then decided upon a plan, that of putting an end to his life, and to this end he climbed the temple-tower and dropped himself down.

Lord Murugan, whose eternal slave he was, held Arunagiri in His arms and saved him from death. The Lord then gave him His Darshana—being surrounded by His devotees, Veda-chants resounding and dancing of His Peacock. The Lord addressed him as '*Arunagiri-Naatha*', showered His side-glance grace, granted Feet-touch, wrote His six-lettered Mantra on Arunagiri's tongue, and imparted knowledge of the Tamil language in its three aspects of prose, poetry and drama. He also gave Arunagiri a Japa-Mala (rosary), removed his *Mala* (dirt) and *Maya* (ignorance), gave *Mowna-Upadesa*, taught him the different Yoga-paths or techniques, imparted Upadesa on Jnana-Marga, and revealed the highest secret of Pranava or Omkara.

The Lord then commanded Arunagiri to sing His praises and, when the latter pleaded his ignorance, the Lord Him-

self gave the first line as "Muttait Taru...." and ordained him to sing thus, which, with the grace of the Lord, Arunagiri completed in no time.

It is worthwhile to record that our revered and late Sri V.S. Chengalvaraya Pillai has quoted authorities for each and everyone of the facts mentioned above from the nook and corner of Arunagiri's works and also from other sources, which all reveal his high scholarship, deep knowledge and devotion to God. However, it is astonishing to note that he has knowingly omitted certain facts which, of course, he has admitted in the very Preface itself.

He says, in the Preface: As we cannot with any certainty say that the printed Tiruppugazh songs are Arunagiri's own words; and as it was the wont with the Tamil saints to depict themselves as being caught up in Maya, though really unaffected by it, for the sake of teaching to the world, I have consciously omitted even certain internal evidences afraid of quoting them as referring to Arunagiri's life, as for instance:

1. In Tiruppugazh verses 392, 752 and 1301, though Arunagiri's words are clear to prove that he led a life (of Grihastha) with wife, children, sister-in-law and other relatives, yet hesitating to boldly state as such I have omitted the same.

2. (a) As regards Arunagiri's caste, he condemns himself in T. No. 26* as 'a low one who avowedly consumes meat'. From this, can one say he belongs to a meat-eating caste? And again, in verse 31 of the *Kandar Anthadi* he (Arunagiri) himself says 'O Brahmins, who mercilessly kill goats and do *Yagas* or sacrifices!' Is he, who thus condemns Brahmins (of their acts of killing of animals), one belonging to the meat-eating caste?

(b) Further, in his work "Sasanat Tamizhkavi Charitham", Rao Saheb M. Raghava Iyengar refers to Arunagiri

*T. Nos. refer to the Tiruppugazh numbers in the author's work "*Murugavel Panniru Tirumurai*".

as 'Sarva-Bhauma Dindima Kavi', 'Ashta-Bhasha Parame-svara', etc. Now, if we propose to claim Arunagiri to be a Brahmin because there is a lot of the usage of Sanskrit language in his Tamil works, (it cannot be; since) we are led to think that to one who had obtained 'countless powers' due to the special grace of Lord Murugan, should the use of Sanskrit language present any difficulty?

To avoid these confusions, I have stated that Arunagiri's caste is unknown, being satisfied that he is a great Tapasvin and a Knower of Truth, concludes Sri V.S.C. Pillai†.

Now, let us consider the above points.

1. A free rendering of T-392 would be:

Wife ridiculing, all townsmen ridiculing, all women-folk ridiculing; father and relatives

Dejected in mind, I also dejected in heart, all people thoughtlessly using condemning words and speaking low of me, Darkness enveloping my pondering mind, I thought 'Is this the happiness of my having taken birth?'—

And reflecting thus daily, when I decided to cast the soul off from this body,—Those Feet that You granted then, O Lord grant me again.

The song begins with the words 'wife ridiculing'. While the ridicule of his wife, father, relatives, etc., is the cause of Arunagiri's taking a decision to put an end to his life, Sri Pillai has taken the effect as an authentic information but ignored the very cause itself. In a song of this type, to take some facts as relevant and cast away some others as irrelevant, and that too, to ignore the cause-factor and accept the effect, neither seems to be rational nor brings soundness to one's research.

†As I had no occasion to study the Tiruppugazh songs earlier, when I read this preface of his, I was eager to have a first-hand knowledge of what Arunagiri says in the songs referred to in the preface as well as in all the other Tiruppugazh songs. I, therefore, felt it necessary to glance through them, atleast, and in doing so many facts were revealed.

Moreover the facts that Arunagiri decided to end his life, that he knew the different earlier Tamil works, etc. are supported by a few authorities only. While these facts can be taken as relevant to Arunagiri's life, why not also take that Arunagiri was married and had wife, children, mother, father and relatives,—a fact which Arunagiri says in unambiguous terms in not less than 30 places, i.e., in his Tiruppugazh poems as well as in his other works.

Further, it is said that it was the wont of great Tamil saints and poets to take upon themselves the shortcomings of the masses, repent for such low acts and invoke the grace of God to condone their evils and shower His blessings; and this method they adopted as an effective means of transforming people, as the poems are given in first person, capable of touching the hearts of people when they recite them. It is, therefore, held by many that the shortcomings depicted by Arunagiri in Tiruppugazh songs need not necessarily refer to him and should not be taken literally. Sri V.S.C. Pillai also contributes to this view, and there is some truth in it. But he seems to have forgotten the important point that this view is advanced primarily to relieve Arunagiri of such evils as debauchery, etc., and not so much to deny that he was a householder; because while prostitution is an evil and sin, Grihasthasrama or the stage of householder is not an evil, crime or shortcoming. On the other hand, Grihasthasrama is a praiseworthy stage of life, more so according to the Tamil scriptures. It is, therefore, really understandable that, while contributing to the above view, Sri Pillai should accept that Arunagiri indulged in prostitution but be not prepared to accede that he led a householder's life. When remote and vague internal evidences are given due authenticity to support even minor facts, what is the harm in accepting that Arunagiri led a family life when there are umpteen evidences for the same? Will it diminish Arunagiri's greatness? Or can we add an inch to his greatness in ignoring this fact? Perhaps to accept that he had wife and children might lend support to the acceptance of the fact that Arunagiri's son has referred about Arunagiri in one of

his Sanskrit works and that a descendant of Arunagiri has donated for the construction of an altar for him at his native village Mullandiram,—facts which are proved by historians based on inscriptions, etc, (as seen earlier)! Is it not strange that he who, setting aside the traditional and historical accounts, has set forth to write the life of Arunagiri based mainly on internal evidences should ignore certain vital facts of life so conspicuously disclosed in his works!

Here we can have a useful and pertinent diversion to see how far this view is right,—the view that what Arunagiri has portrayed of himself in the Tiruppugazh songs do not refer to him, that he never led an evil or sensuous life (including a family life), and that his early life was pure and unblemished.

It is true that great men take upon themselves the evils of the general masses, and Arunagiri too has done so in some Tiruppugazh songs with the intention of educating and reforming the evil doers. This can be evident from such songs as T-121: '*Seeralasadan*'; T-180: '*Thitamili*'; T-183: '*Pancha Paadagan*'; T-576: '*Pulaiyanaana*'; T-611: '*Avaguna Viraganai*'; T-291: '*Thaakkamarukkoru*'; T-363: '*Maalaasai Kopa*', etc., wherein he condemns himself in general terms,—as a sinner, an egoistic person, a fool, a good-for-nothing person, an uncultured, an unlettered, etc., etc.,—and prays to the Lord for His grace. Such poems are depictions, no doubt, because the evils mentioned in these are of a general nature. Also, there are poems which can prove that he was well-versed in the earlier works of the Tamil and Sanskrit languages, that he was cultured, that he had practised Tapas in his earlier births, etc., all which will be contradicted if the above verses are to be taken literally. Since the condemnation in these Tiruppugazh songs is of a general nature, we can easily take these poems as depictions and not literally as referring to himself.

But, all Tiruppugazh poems are not of this type only and Arunagiri cannot be said to merely take upon himself the evils, shortcomings and misdeeds of others, because

there are also poems of a quite different type wherein he does not condemn himself in general terms as a low man, a fool, etc., but says something worse and of a different nature altogether, i.e., something of a personal nature.

In many of his Tiruppugazh songs, which are rather more in number than the depiction-poems, he vividly describes his different experiences with the prostitute women,—how they lure men, what they talk in privacy, how they offer measured (i.e., less or liberal) enjoyment in commensurate with the wealth offered by men, what modifications their different limbs undergo before, at the time of and following the sexual act, what sounds they produce, what experiences the lover himself undergoes, etc., etc. One can clearly see that there is an element of *one's personal experience* in these poems. While the evils and wrong deeds of others, which are of a general nature, can be portrayed in oneself, experiences cannot be so done unless one has had them for oneself. Such poems as T-46: '*Angai Menkuzhal Aaivaar*'; T-287: '*Koonthal Avizhthu*'; T-329: '*Angai Neettiya*'; T-336: '*Kumutha Vaaikkani*'; T-364: '*Megamenum Kuzhal*'; T-785: '*Paadagach Chilambodu*'; etc., can give ample testimony to the fact that these are Arunagiri's personal experiences.

Not only this. In certain Tiruppugazh songs Arunagiri vehemently criticises and abuses public women with such piercing, forceful and dirty words that they cannot be mere depictions. He must have undergone such suffering and torture at their hands that he scolds, abuses, criticises and curses them to his heart's content, as though to avenge for the harm they have done to him. He does not seem to be satisfied with attacking them in a few poems; he takes recourse to it again and again. Such must have been the immensity of his suffering at the hands of the fallen women that he could not rest satisfied with merely praising the Lord for having saved him from their clutches, but also vehemently attacks them as though in a revengeful attitude. This can be evident from T-267: '*Thodaththulakkigal*'; T-269: '*Thiruttu Naarigal*'; T-677: '*Kanavaalan Koorvizhi*';

T-698: '*Kadiya Vega Maaraatha*'; T-884: '*Kuritha Nenjaasai*'; etc., etc.

Further, a scrutiny of such songs as T-392: '*Manaiyaval Nagaikka*'; T-509: '*Kumara Gurupara*'; T-513: '*Makara Merikadal*'; T-916: '*Tiruvvuroopa Neraaga*'; etc., will leave no room to doubt that Arunagiri not merely led a family life but that his indulgence in debauchery was *real* and not a mere depiction, because the special favours conferred by the Lord, as acknowledged by the Saint in these poems, are of a purely personal nature and were granted to Arunagiri and not to somebody else, and as these divine favours saved him from indulgence in prostitution, ridicule of his wife, etc., these facts cannot but be as much real and pertaining to Arunagiri as the favours obtained by him. It cannot be that the blessings mentioned were received by him and the evils which those blessings cured or removed are of someone else, i.e., these songs cannot be depictions.

Above all, Arunagiri himself says in unambiguous terms that his entanglement in the meshes of public women was due to his past deeds and as ordained by Brahma (T-584: '*Vidhiyathaagave*'; T-842: '*Thodutha Naal Mudhal*').

Thus we can see that the Tiruppugazh songs are of various types: there are poems of self-condemnation by way of depiction of others' evils upon himself, to educate the masses and help turn the minds of men towards God; there are poems of confession and repentance over his past evil life with the courtesans, to be freed from which he seeks God's grace; there are gratitude-showing poems wherein he acknowledges the special favours conferred on him, which saved him from the clutches of prostitute women; there are poems of severe attack and criticism of public women, to avenge the harm done to him. There are also poems which do not come under any of the above classifications. There are poems which reveal the different kinds of spiritual experience obtained by Arunagiri purely out of the Lord's infinite grace; there are poems which are only praises of God (T-100: '*Naada Vindu*'; T-270: '*Arakara Sivanari*'; T-366:

'*Saravana Jaataa*'; T-101: '*Bodakantharu*'; T-654-I: '*Parama-gurunaatha*'; T-730: '*Seethala Vaarija*'); there are poems which contain information on different subjects such as diseases (T-228: '*Vaadamodu*'; T-260: '*Irumaluroga*'; T-582: '*Valivaada*'), Yoga (T-190: '*Moolankilarodu*'; T-647: '*Naalu Sathuratha*'; T-652: '*Mathiya Manguna*'; T-896: '*Pancha-Pulanum*'; T-1114: '*Neerunila Mandaatha*'), music (*Tala*), etc., etc. Hence we cannot bring all Tiruppugazh songs under a single category of 'depiction, etc.', nor can we relegate one category of poems to another. They have to be carefully sifted and Arunagiri understood in his true perspective, which is, of course, not an easy task.

Though the Tiruppugazh songs are, in general, variegated in their nature and purpose in their first halves, their second halves are almost of a uniform nature in that they extol the Lord of Six Faces in diverse ways. Hence the name Tiruppugazh—songs of praise (*Pugazh*), of God or the Glorious One (*Tiru*).

The dexterity of Arunagiri in dealing with the theme dealt with in each Tiruppugazh is such that he infuses life into it. His ability is *par excellence* and he is a past master in the art of revealing facts and his experiences,—whether temporal or spiritual, sensory or Divine,—in touching and lively expressions. This has so much endeared Arunagiri to Saint Thayumanavar that the latter exclaims:

*Aiyaa Arunagiri Appaa Unnaippol
Maiyaaga Ore Sol Vilambinar Yaar?*

"O Arunagiri, my (spiritual) father! Who has, like you, uttered a word of truth?"

II. (a) As regards Sri Pillai's views on T-26 and Kandar Anthadi-31 (see page xLv) I may quote from Sri Sadhu Anuvanandaji's article "Life of Sri Arunagirinathar", published in the 'Sri Vallimalai Tiruppugazh Sacchidananda Swami Centenary Jayanti Souvenir' (1970), as follows:

"These are not formidable objections, for Arunagiri as a Gowda Brahmin may be permitted to partake of certain

animal-food by the rules of his caste, but even then Arunagiri deploras his indulgence in it. Even a Brahmin could condemn animal-sacrifices in Yajnas as they have become scarce at the time, being disapproved by the better class of Brahmins."

Thus, the statements that Arunagiri ate meat and yet condemned Brahmins eating meat are neither irreconcilable, nor do they nullify our claim to Arunagiri being a Brahmin.

Apart from the above reply, we may offer one from another point of view, which would appear to be more appropriate and convincing, too:

Arunagiri's confession of 'eating meat with eagerness' only hints at the fact that he did belong by birth, to a non-meat-eating caste (a Brahmin) and that his eating meat was only accidental, i.e., in and due to the company of courtesans (who are meat-eaters), T-391: '*Soodu Kolai*'; who are dirty ones that give stimulating and intoxicating food-stuffs as diet, T-677: '*Kanavaalang-Koorvizhi*'; who commit murders, who spoil the high and noble births of people, who have no regard for the caste-distinctions, T-817: '*Vangaara Marpilani*') and whose association is the cause for the five great sins (Pancha-Mahapatakas) and many other vices, from which meat-eating cannot be excluded. And, Arunagiri's condemnation of the Brahmins' merciless acts of *himsa* or cruelty of killing goats in Yajnas, only, again, hints that though he belonged to the Brahmin caste, yet, he condemned it because it is an act of cruelty which deserves condemnation whether done by Brahmins or others. In both these statements, Arunagiri has stated *bare facts*,—facts as they are, for which act he is outstanding. A Brahmin openly confessing that he ate meat, and at the same time condemning the Brahmins' merciless act of killing animals in sacrifice enhance his greatness, for who but Arunagiri would venture to state facts so frankly? He is an exceptional type of person to whom disclosing facts thread-bare is simple and spontaneous. While Arunagiri thus condemns the cruel acts of Brahmins, he, on the other hand, also praises them for

the observance of their pious and prescribed religious deeds in T-625, '*Thaathu Maamalar*': "O Lord who is worshipped daily, as prescribed in the Vedas, without any flaw, and very ceremoniously by the 3000 *glorious Brahmins* (at Chidambaram)"; T-432, '*Vilaikku Meniyil*': "O Lord who is enshrined at Tirukkonamalai, where reside *eminent Brahmins* who are versed in the four Vedas which are eternal"; T-504: '*Kuruthi Pulaal*'; T-577: '*Bhoga Karpakkadavul*'; etc., etc.

II. (b) If Arunagiri's use of Sanskrit words is attributable to the 'countless powers' he attained due to the Lord's grace, can we not, with the same breath, say that his knowledge of the different earlier Tamil works referred to in Tiruppugazh, etc., is also due to the very same 'countless powers' conferred by God? Why should we, then, attribute them to Arunagiri? One would do justice in attributing all that is of any worth in Arunagiri to the Lord's grace, rather than attribute certain aspects to the Lord and certain others to Arunagiri, which Arunagiri himself would feel shy to claim.

Arunagiri says, in T-432, '*Vilaikku Meniyil*': "O Lord Muruga, whose form is of the essence of the songs composed by Vasishtha, Kasyapa, Yogis well up in Tapas, Agastya Muni, Idaikkaadar and Nakkirar!" While the songs composed by the latter ones are in Tamil, those of Vasishtha and others are in Sanskrit. It is, therefore, quite evident that Arunagiri was well conversant not only with the Tamil works of Idaikkaadar and others, but also with the Sanskrit works of Vasishtha and others.

Also, Arunagiri's mention of "Munis offering Tarpana, uttering '*Aadityaaya*' (which means 'to the Sun-God'), doing the Gayatri Japa and Archana' in the early morning, after a clean bath, facing the east' (T-508: '*Velaippol*') can be taken as sufficient proof of not only his knowledge of the Sanskrit language but also of his belonging to a caste to which these rituals are obligatory and with which he was

naturally well conversant; for, otherwise, he could never give such a meticulous detail.

A critical study of his Tiruppugazh songs will, on the other hand, reveal, to our own surprise, that Arunagiri's knowledge of the Tamil language was conferred on him by Lord Skanda, whom he extols as the Tamil-God. "O Lord, who gave me the glorious Tamil language that I could daily sing the praises of Your radiant, Divine Feet," says Arunagiri, in T-214: '*Sarana Kamalaalayattai*'. We do not find Arunagiri acknowledging anywhere to this effect in regard to the use of Sanskrit in his works. It appears that Lord Murugan ordained Arunagiri to sing in the Tamil language, though he knew both the languages, giving him a special power to compose poems in that language when He gave the first line to start with. Perhaps, but for this special conference and ordainment to sing His glories in the Tamil language, Arunagiri would have, in all probability, done it in the Sanskrit language itself in which he seems to have had a greater mastery even from his early life. Yet his proficiency in, his knowledge of and his love for Sanskrit is so much that he could not resist the spontaneous overflow and lavish use of Sanskrit phrases and words, and even full stanzas, in many a Tiruppugazh, as well as in his other works. Such exuberant use of Sanskrit in Tamil works is also a special feature of Arunagiri's works and is rarely seen in the Tamil works of other saints. Hence we can conclude, with all emphasis, that Arunagiri's knowledge of the Sanskrit language was not due to the 'countless powers' conferred on him by the Lord, but that he was well-versed in both the Sanskrit and Tamil languages even from his early life, having been born in a Brahmin family.

And, if we are to accept that Arunagiri knew the Tirukural, etc., merely because there is direct or indirect mention of them *in a few places* in his works, we should also be charitable enough to accept that he knew the Vedas, the Upanishads, etc., to which also he makes reference *in innumerable places*. But, surprisingly, Sri Pillai has failed to

record all these facts, i.e., that Arunagiri was well-versed in Sanskrit and that he knew the Vedas, Upanishads, etc. His research does not seem to be impartial, certain facts being intentionally omitted.

From a study of the above views, we may make an assessment of Arunagiri's early life as follows:

(a) He was a native of Mullandiram near Tiruvannamalai and a descendant of the Gowda Brahmins who were learned scholars and poets, himself being a talented Sanskrit poet, called 'Dindima Kavi' (Sri Raghava Iyengar's research);

(b) He was well-versed in the earlier Tamil works such as the Thevaaram, Tirukkural, Tirumantiram, etc. (Sri V.S.C. Pillai's research work);

(c) He was highly learned in the Sanskrit language and had deep knowledge in the Sanskrit literature, because he makes free use of Sanskrit words and phrases in his works as also there is a lot of reference to the Vedas, Upanishads, Gayatri-Mantra, Tarpana, etc., in his compositions.

It cannot be argued that the use of Sanskrit words, etc., was due to the 'countless powers' conferred on Arunagiri by the Lord, for the same argument will hold good in respect of item (b) above. Hence, if we are to take internal evidences as authentic in respect of item (b), we cannot help accepting item (c) as true;

Items (b) and (c) suggest that Arunagiri must have hailed from a highly religious and cultural family whose tradition it is to educate their children in both the Tamil and Sanskrit languages, i.e., he belonged to a Brahmin family.

(d) Being a native of Mullandiram, he lived at Tiruvannamalai. His settlement there may be either in his boyhood for his education, or after his marriage for his livelihood. That he lived at Tiruvannamalai where the Lord blessed him when he tried to commit suicide is evident from many Tirupugazh songs, and is beyond doubt;

(e) Even before he was ordained by the Lord to sing His glories, Arunagiri had the capacity to compose poems, which he made use of to earn wealth to be given to his paramours (T-146: '*Irukanaka*'; T-494: '*Arivilaap*'; etc.);

(f) He was a married man and had wife, children, father, mother, and in-laws (T-392: '*Manaiyaval Nagaikka*') and yet he fell a victim to the lures of prostitute women (T-132: '*Thakara Narumalar*'; T-436: '*Seelamula Thaayaar*'), which was due to his Prarabdha Karmas or fate (T-584, '*Vi-dhiyathaagave*'; T-842, '*Thodutha Naal Mudhal*');;

(g) Dejected and fed up with the wretched life of debauchery which resulted in contracting many diseases and poverty and also the ridicule of his wife, kinsmen and even his paramours, Arunagiri decided to put an end to his life (T-392: '*Manaiyaval Nagaikka*'; T-394: '*Kothi Mudhithu*'); and

(h) When Arunagiri attempted suicide, the Lord held him and conferred various blessings on him (T-392, T-513, T-515, etc.).

After Ordainment

Now let us proceed further. Arunagiri who was saved by the Lord and commanded to sing His glories, undertook a pilgrimage to pay his homage to Lord Murugan enshrined in almost every town, village and even out-of-the-way places, and wherever he went he paid his tribute to the Lord of that place by dedicating one or more Tiruppugazh songs in honour of that Lord by referring to the name of the place in that particular song. Thus we gather from the available songs that he visited more than 200 places of Lord Skanda, big and small, scattered all over India. Some of these places are:

Chidambaram, Vaitheswaran Koil, Mayuram, Sikkal, Ettukuti, Vedaranyam, Tiruvavaduthurai, Tiruppanandal, Kumbakonam, Swami Malai, Tanjavur, Salem, Tiruchchengodu, Tiruchirappalli, Vayaloor, Virali Malai, Palani, Madurai, Tirupparankundram, Pazhamudirsolai, Tirunelveli,

Tiruchchendur, Valliyoora, Tirukkonam, Kadirkamam (in Ceylon), Papa Nasam, Sivakasi, Rameswaram (all these places are south of Tiruvannamalai); Tirupporur, Kanchipuram, Madras, Valli Malai, Tiruttani, Tiruppati, Kalahasti, Varanasi, Hardwar (Mayapuri), Mount Kailasa, Jagannath (Puri), Vishakapatnam, and back to Tiruvannamalai (these places are north of Tiruvannamalai).

The Tiruppugazh songs had a special charm. These verses appealed to the people and touched their hearts because of their beauty, style, rhythm, depth of meaning and above all the grace of the Lord who commissioned Arunagiri with the mission of moral regeneration, religious unity and dissemination of spiritual wisdom. The Tiruppugazh poems were felt to be a boon by one and all—the sensuous man found not only his deplorable condition portrayed but also a way out shown; vain Pandits who wasted their time in debates were made to see their folly; devotees who needed more inspiration found verses of surrender and invocation; the aspirant who thirsted for wisdom got the required material for contemplation and enquiry; etc. Thus the Tiruppugazh songs were a mine of social, religious and spiritual wealth that could satisfy and lift up each and every kind of person. People were, therefore, easily attracted towards the Tiruppugazh songs. Men and women everywhere began to sing his verses and dance in ecstasy. His Tiruppugazh songs soon became so popular that people in the north and south, in the east and west began to recite them, says Arunagiri himself in one of his songs (T-384: '*Pattar Ganappriya*'). This brought Arunagiri name and fame, and great reverence from every quarter.

It is rare that name and fame go unencountered by jealousy and hatred. It is said that the great literary scholar and poet, Sri Villiputturar, the author of the *Mahabharata* in Tamil-verses and a staunch Vaishnavite, went about the Tamil country, inviting poets and men of learning for a literary contest, defeated them by his vast erudition, and, as a punishment, cut off their ears. He was an embodiment

of vanity and haughtiness. Probably God, the Almighty, wanted to teach him a lesson. The great fame of Saint Arunagiri could not be tolerated by him. He went to Tiruvannamalai with the evil intention of putting down Arunagiri in a contest. Though the Saint was not eager for such a contest,—he being a devotee of God and a personification of humility,—he accepted it, taking it as the will of God. Arunagiri answered all the questions put by Villiputturar, and now his turn came. Arunagiri composed a series of poems, which work is called *Kandar Anthadi*, and Villiputturar annotated and expounded the meaning of the verses at once. But when it came to the 54th verse, in spite of his best efforts, he could neither decipher the poem nor make out anything whatsoever from it. Indeed this was most strange! He accepted his defeat at the hands of Arunagiri who wrote the meaning for the poem, which is even today the only available commentary on that particular verse. And, as per the terms of the contest, Villiputturar's ears were to be cut off, for which he offered himself. But Arunagiri would never indulge in any act of cruelty. He let off the scholar go unhumiliated but took a word from him that he shall never repeat his inhuman act any more. This act of compassion earned for Arunagiri the title "Karunaikku Arunagiri" meaning "Arunagiri, for compassion".

As we have seen earlier, Arunagiri lived during the reign of Pravuda Deva Raya II (who ruled in the second quarter of the 15th century) to whom he makes a reference in one of his Tiruppugazh songs. Arunagiri's extraordinary love for Lord Murugan and his compassionate attitude towards Villiputturar evoked the admiration and reverence of Pravuda Deva. The king considered himself most fortunate to be an admirer of a Saint to whom God is a living reality. The king virtually adored the Saint. He accorded a royal reception to Arunagiri and honoured him suitably in his court.

There was a great Devi-Upasaka,—a devotee of the Divine Mother,—Sambandandan by name. He was an ardent Jain and had intimate friendship with the king Pravuda

Deva, for his own ends. The wide-spread fame of Arunagiri and the special honour accorded to him by the king kindled Sambandandan's jealousy towards Arunagiri, as he feared he would no more get the king's favour. He, therefore, struck upon a cunning plan to defame Arunagiri. He approached Pravuda Deva and said: "You adore Arunagiri. But he is not really as great a devotee of Lord Murugan as you take him to be. If you think he is really so, ask him to manifest his Ishta Devata in an open assembly. And I challenge, I can do so and give you Darsana of my Divine Mother. If I fail, I shall leave your kingdom; and if he fails, let him go away." Pravuda Deva could not tolerate this jealous attitude of Sambandandan and prayed to Arunagiri, conveying the former's challenge, to accede to the contest. Arunagiri agreed and elaborate arrangements were made. A big assembly was convened at the courtyard of the Arunachaleshwarar Temple. The king with his consort, nobles and the public at large gathered there to witness this unusual contest. Sambandandan made all sorts of feats, pomp and show to manifest his Ishta Devata,—Kali,—but failed. Now came Arunagiri's turn. He made no special efforts, but sang a Tiruppugazh song, which begins with '*Athala Sedanarada*' (T-1056). The free-translation of the song is this:

"O Son-in-law (Lord Skanda) of Lord Vishnu, who (as Lord Krishna) helped Bhimasena (one of the five Pandava brothers), who has his *Gada* weapon ever on his shoulders, to drive away the vast army of enemies; who played on His flute which attracted back the cows that were scattered; who, being the driver to the chariot of Arjuna, blew His conch which shines like gold and emanates notes of the Vedas; who reclines over the milk-ocean with dashing waves; whose Divine Feet scaled the earth itself and pressed (it into the nether regions); who has *Garuda* as His Vahana or vehicle! O Lord Muruga who resides in the heart of Pravuda Deva Maharaja as to make it dance in joy! O Lord of Lords! come dancing, O Lord, come dancing in such a way that when You dance, everything dances,—the Adishesha dances in the nether worlds; the mount Meru dances on the earth; Kali

dances with Lord Siva, the bull-rider; the Ganas of Siva dance around Him; the sweet Sarasvati dances; Brahma, who is seated on the lotus, dances; the Devas dance; the moon dances; your mother-in-law, Lakshmi Devi seated on the red-lotus, dances; your father-in-law, Lord Vishnu who showed His Visvarupa (cosmic form), dances; and the Peacock (on which you ride), too, dances. (Come dancing, O Lord, please come)."

No sooner did Arunagiri finish the song than the Lord appeared before the assembly, on a dancing peacock, by manifesting Himself from a pillar, and gave Darsana to all. These facts, viz., that the Lord appeared in no time, on a dancing peacock and gave His vision to all, are revealed by Arunagiri himself in two of his other Tiruppugazh songs (one of Viruddhachala, T-755: '*Tirumozhi*'; and one of Tiruchirappally, T-331: '*Arivaiyar*'; respectively). The pillar from which Lord Murugan appeared as also the Mandapam where the assembly was convened are to be seen even today in the Arunachaleswarar temple, where a small shrine is dedicated to Lord Murugan. As the Lord here came out of a *Khamba* or pillar, He is called "*Khambattu Ilayanaar*".

There are, of course, different versions with a lot of variations regarding the above incidence. Some hold that when Sambandandan prayed to Kali, she appeared before him and said to him that she could be seen by him alone and not by the king and others. Another version, in this context, is that the Devi was bound by Her promise to give Darsana only for a period of twelve years which period was over just the day prior to the contest and so she did not appear at all. He, however, requested Her not to allow Murugan to manifest Himself, at least, to which she agreed. And so when Arunagiri sang the '*Athala Sedanarada*' song, the Lord did not appear. He, therefore, sensed some mischief somewhere and through his Yogic vision found out that the Devi was holding Murugan as a small baby on her laps and entertaining Him with Her conversations, thus preventing His appearance in the assembly. Arunagiri, it is said,

sang the *Devandra Sanga Vaguppu* and then the *Mayil Viruttham* to which latter's tune a peacock danced before the Kali, and She, being enamoured of the melody of the music and the dance of the peacock, unconsciously loosened Her hold on Murugan when He jumped over to the peacock, hastened to the assembly and gave Darsana. However, the view that the Lord gave immediate Darsana seems to be more correct, reasonable and even supported by the Saint's own words. The Lord cannot be bound or held in check by anything except the true love of His devotee, which can attract the Lord from any realm and manifest Him in no time on the physical plane. Moreover, to Arunagiri Lord Murugan was not merely the personal God or Ishta Devata, He was also the Supreme Being. This is evident even from the above Tiruppugazh. Though the Lord is addressed as the son-in-law of Lord Vishnu, etc., which all points to the theological aspects of Him, He is asked to come dancing in such a way that when He dances, everything, everywhere, dances, including Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, too, which reveals that He is the Supreme Reality that is behind even the trinity. This is amply made clear in another poem also (T-433, '*Agaramumaagi*'): "O Lord who is (the beginning of all things) like the *Akara* or the letter 'A' which stands first among alphabets, who is the Lord of all things, who is beyond everything, who is the essence of all things, who is Brahma, who is Vishnu, who is Siva, who is beyond this trinity; who is all things here, who is whatever thing anywhere is, and who comes as the sweetness (of all things)."

The Murugan that Arunagiri manifested was not so much the theological God but the Supreme Reality that is behind the different manifestations. Hence, there should be no question of the Devi holding Skanda somewhere in Kailasa. It does not, however, mean that one God is inferior or superior to another. Every manifestation of God has different aspects; at least two,—the Absolute and the relative. Lord Krishna was not merely the friend and charioteer of Arjuna but also the *Bhagavan* or Supreme God who gave the

Gita-Upadesa as also showed Arjuna the Visvarupa. Similar is the case with all Gods,—Lord Skanda, Devi, etc. The Lord is all aspects at once, and it is the attitude of the devotee with which the Lord is invoked, viz. Sattvika, Rajasika or Tamasika, that determines matters. Arunagiri had pure devotion and his invocation was not motivated by personal ends, while that of Sambandandan was prejudiced and motivated. This accounts for the spontaneous manifestation of Lord Skanda and the non-appearance of the Devi, respectively. God is a slave of the devotee's love, whichever be the form of God, and whoever be the devotee. The incidence only proves the greatness of Arunagiri and his pure love for God, which was equally great towards the Divine Mother, too, as can be seen from many of his Tiruppugazh songs. Incidentally, it may be mentioned that he had the blessing of the Divine Mother, too.

Under such circumstances, to say that the Devi was holding fast to Murugan preventing Him from coming to the assembly would at best disclose one's inadequate understanding of Arunagiri's love for Murugan as also his concept of God, which was one of the spiritual Reality behind everything. That is why Arunagiri says in the above Tiruppugazh, 'O Lord! come dancing so that when You dance, Siva, Vishnu, Brahma, Kali, etc.,—everything dances!' When such is the prayer, if Kali were really to hold fast to Murugan, Arunagiri's prayer would have manifested not only Murugan alone but would have brought the Kali, too, with Him.

When Arunagiri manifested Lord Skanda and the king had His Darsana, it is said that the king lost his eye-sight due to the divine brilliance which human sight cannot endure. At once Arunagiri gave *Bhasma* or the holy ash and brought back the king's eye-sight. This is one version; while the other is that Arunagiri fetched the Paarijata-flowers from heaven and restored the king's vision. It is thus:

Having been defeated in the contest, Sambandandan disappeared from the assembly in utter shame and left the kingdom. But his enmity to Arunagiri did not subside. He

somehow wanted to do away with Arunagiri and so, after sometime, he approached the king again. Knowing that the king who had lost his eye-sight would be eager to get it back somehow, Sambandandan said to the king: "O mighty king! There is only one way of getting back your eye-sight. If the heavenly Paarijata-flowers are brought and placed over your eyes, they will regain vision. And this super-human act, only Arunagiri and myself are capable of doing. But I wish that Arunagiri do it, as my bringing the flowers will affect his fame and glory. Please, therefore, request him to fetch the flowers and in case he declines to do so, I shall at once bring them for you." The king, not knowing Sambandandan's evil intentions but desirous of regaining his vision, requested Arunagiri accordingly, to which the latter readily agreed. Arunagiri climbed the Temple-Gopuram (Tower), left his physical body there, entered the body of a parrot that was just dead then, and flew to the heavenly region. It is said that he did this as one cannot go to heaven with this *Panchabhuta-Sarira* or the body made of five elements. [But, strangely, the parrot's body too is made up of the same five elements!] Sambandandan took this opportunity and informed the king that Arunagiri is dead, that his body lies in the Arunachala-Gopuram and that it should be burnt soon. The king, too, without due investigation or thought, ordered it to be cremated, which the evil-minded got done without the least delay, lest Arunagiri should come back.

The Arunagiri-parrot returned from heaven with the Paarijata-flowers only to find his body missing from the Gopuram. Taking it to be the Will of God, the parrot went to the king, offered the flowers to him and, to his great joy, restored his eye-sight. The king felt extremely sorry for his hasty and unconsidered action in getting Arunagiri's body burnt, wept bitterly and begged his pardon. The Arunagiri-parrot, his divine mission being over, flew away and seated itself on the arms of the Lord, for eternity.

There seems to be no authentic internal evidence either

for the king's losing eye-sight on having the Darsana of the Lord, or for the rest of the story, which is all mostly based on hearsay.

It is indeed strange and unbelievable that:

(i) When the Lord is made to appear for the purpose of giving Darsana to the king, that he should lose his eye-sight by that vision of God; and that in that huge assembly only the king should lose his eye-sight and no one else. In fact, if someone's eye-sight were to be affected, it should have been that of the evil-intentioned Sambandandan and not the pious, devoted king.

(ii) Arunagiri should physically (though as a parrot) go to heaven to fetch the Paarijata-flowers; for to one who could manifest the Lord Himself in an open assembly by a mere prayer, to fetch a few Paarijata-flowers by another prayer should have been no difficult job.

(iii) The king should order, without proper investigation, for the cremation of the body of Arunagiri who had gone for his benefit and service, and that too at his request.

In support of Arunagiri becoming a parrot, one of his Tiruppugazhs (T-425: '*Sariyaiyaalarkkum*') is quoted, wherein Arunagiri prays to the Lord to grant him the faultless state of *Sayujya* which is also the endless state of fame and supreme joy itself (*Sukha-Svarupa*). In Tamil, the word for 'Bliss' or 'Ananda' as well as for 'parrot' is written in the same way, as *Suka*. And so when Arunagiri says '*Suka-Svarupa*', it is interpreted as the *Svarupa* or form of a parrot. But, in the above interpretation, one important factor is forgotten, viz., that the '*Suka-Svarupa*' prayed for by Arunagiri is almost like an explanation of the earlier and essential part of the prayer, i.e., 'the faultless state of *Sayujya*'. *Sayujya* is the state of oneness with the Lord. It is the fourth and final state of liberation,—the first three being *Salokya*, *Samipya* and *Sarupya*,—and the form of the parrot cannot be equated with *Sayujya*. Even if the parrot perches on the arms of the Lord forever, it cannot be called the state

of Sayujya. The state of being a parrot can at best be Samipya, not even Sarupya; what to say of Sayujya? Hence 'Suka' should be taken to mean only the state of *Ananda* and not of a parrot. It is the state of *Satchidananda* that is really the state of endless glory and Supreme Bliss.

Moreover, there is a subtle difference between 'Svarupa' and 'Rupa'. While the latter refers to the 'external form', the former denotes a 'state' or 'essential nature' and has reference to the inner attainment, a state of consciousness. Sukha-Svarupa is a Sanskrit term and clearly indicates the 'state of happiness' or 'Final Beatitude' attained on liberation, though the term can be given a distorted Tamil meaning of 'the parrot's form'. Above all, this prayer is only for the final attainment, not for going to heaven to fetch Paarijata; nor did the Lord grant Arunagiri the body of a parrot in fulfilment of his prayer. It was Arunagiri himself who entered the dead body of a parrot. It seems to be a travesty of affairs to try to justify this act of Arunagiri by investing it with a divine will, as though the Lord ordained him to enter the parrot's body. When the Arunagiri-parrot did not find his body, he could have entered into some other human being's body, if Arunagiri wanted it. If it be argued that Arunagiri was contented with being in the parrot's body because 'anything that has a beginning has an end', and so his human body had to disappear, the same law holds equally good in the case of the body of the (dead) parrot, which was not granted to Arunagiri in a divine way but into which he entered of his own accord. To say that the Lord chose to grant Arunagiri the state of a parrot (Suka-Svarupa), from amongst Arunagiri's innumerable prayers, to justify which he is said to have gone to heaven as a parrot to fetch Paarijata-flowers, creating a need for it on account of the king *alone* losing his eye-sight in that huge assembly on having a vision of the Lord,—all these appear to be stories for entertainment and far-fetched from truth.

Neither can the king alone be said to have deserved the losing of eye-sight, nor is it necessary for Arunagiri to go to

heaven to fetch Paarijata-flowers (for he could have obtained them by a mere prayer), nor would the king have ordered the cremation of Arunagiri's body thoughtlessly (as he was obliged to protect it till his return), nor also would the Omniscient Lord interpret Arunagiri's prayer for the Sayujya state of Sukha-Svarupa as one of a parrot-state. Indeed the whole story seems to be a conjured up one, for there is a shrine dedicated to Arunagiri in the western part of the Arunachaleshwarar's temple in Tiruvannamalai, which is said to be the Samadhisthana of Saint Arunagiri, where his body was interred on his attaining liberation.

Thus, in short, we may sum up the life of Arunagiri, based on internal evidences, inscriptions, etc., as follows:-

Arunagiri was a descendant of the family of Gowda Brahmins, which came from the north and settled in Mullandiram and other villages. He was well-versed in Tamil and Sanskrit even from his young age. He had good education and up-bringing. He was a married man and had wife, children, in-laws and other relatives. Probably, for the sake of his education, his parents and he had settled in Tiruvannamalai. Even though married, as fate would have it, he fell a victim to the courtesans of Tiruvannamalai, lost all his property and contracted incurable diseases, on account of which he was not only ashamed of himself, but was also ridiculed and laughed at by his dear and near ones. To end this kind of wretched life, he climbed the top of the Arunachala Temple *Gopuram* and dropped himself down to commit suicide. The all-merciful Lord Skanda, to whom he had love in his heart, held him in His arms, wrote the sacred Mantra on his tongue with His *Vel*, gave a Japa-Mala and commanded him to sing His glories, giving him the first line to commence the sacred mission. The sinner, in a moment, became a saint of the highest realisation, had diverse divine experiences in addition to being cured of all his diseases. He became a Sannyasin or a renunciate, in the true sense of the term. He sang 16,000 Tiruppugazh songs and composed many other works, won Villuputturar in a literary

contest and made Lord Murugan manifest Himself to give Darsana to king Pravuda Deva in a challenge with Sambandandan. Finally, he attained the highest state of *Sayujya* or the Advaitic realisation of being one with the Almighty Lord Skanda or Parabrahman. Thus did Arunagiri live a glorious life of God-consciousness, exhibiting many a superhuman deed, lifting people from the quagmire of Samsara and planting them firmly in the awareness of God; and the Saint continues to guide seeking souls to perfection, lending them the needed support, even today. May the grace of Saint Arunagiri be upon us all, always!

Arunagiri's Works

(1) *Tiruppugazh*: As Arunagiri was ordained by Lord Murugan to sing His glories, the Saint's main work is the Tiruppugazh songs. *Tiru* is God or Divine and *Pugazh* is glory. Hence, true to the title, it is primarily the glory of God that is sung in these verses which are 16,000 in number, though only about 1,300 are available now. Even from these one can get a glimpse of the extraordinary capacity of the Saint. These Tiruppugazh songs contain information on different subjects like religion, art, music and literature; the different systems of Yoga like Bhakti, Jnana, Raja, Kundalini, Hatha, etc. Though Lord Murugan is the sole Object of praise, each Tiruppugazh being addressed to Him and ending with '*Perumale*', etc., Arunagiri so dexterously brings in all other deities like Vishnu, Brahma, Siva, Vinayaka, Lakshmi, Sarasvati, Parvati, Kali, Rama, Krishna, etc., in the capacity of their relation to Skanda as this or that, and thus glorifies everyone of them. In so doing, Arunagiri brings in innumerable anecdotes, incidents and episodes from the Ramayana, Mahabharata, Srimad-Bhagavata, Periya Puranam, Skanda-Purana, etc. It is believed that, apart from the purpose of turning the minds of people from sensuality to religion and devotion, the Avatara of Arunagiri heralded a new era of religious unity, tolerance and understanding between the Saivaites and Vaishnavaites, through his Tiruppugazh songs which, in glorifying Lord

Skanda, praise Him as the son of Siva, Uma Devi, etc., as also the son-in-law of Vishnu, Lakshmi, etc., thus bringing about a compromise between the two sects. Indeed this is no small achievement. This praise of all Gods and Goddesses is one of the outstanding features of Arunagiri's Tiruppugazh songs, and is rarely seen in the works of any single saint or poet of the Tamil country.

Another salient feature is the free employment of Sanskrit words, phrases and even complete lines in Tiruppugazh and also in the *Kandar Alankaram*, which exhibits not only Arunagiri's mastery over that language but also his skill to blend it with Tamil, and thus show that the two languages are not incompatible with each other.

The Tiruppugazh songs are in *Santham* metre and Arunagiri is the pioneer of this type of poems in the Tamil language.

If the available 1,300 and odd Tiruppugazhs themselves disclose so much of the superhuman skill of Arunagiri and his vast range of knowledge in different fields, we can imagine the mine of information and wisdom that could be inherited by us if all the 16,000 songs were to become available to us. But, at the same time, we can also imagine what an amount of confusion and uncertainty it would create as regards his life-history, as there are enough contradictions and differences of views in the information culled from the available poems themselves. What little has been predicted about his life based on the extant internal evidences is likely to be totally contradicted and a new picture of Arunagiri painted. Of course, it is quite possible that more authentic clues or even definite information might become available.

(2) *Kandar Alankaram*: This is a work of 107 verses. As the title suggests, it gives a grand description of the Divine personality of Lord Skanda from Feet to Head, and His adventurous deeds, as also descriptions of His consorts, Valli and Deivayanai; His Vahana (vehicle), the Peacock and the Cock. The language or style of the verses is also dramatic in character, kindling the spirit of emotion, or

evoking enthusiasm, or admonishing with words jolting and piercing in their effect, such as:

"Is one to study the poems of Vel-Murugan, which free one from rebirth, at the last moment when the terrible Yama, fierce in nature, throws his noose on one's neck and drags?"

"By the touch of the wind created by the movement of the plumage of the Peacock of Lord Murugan, the mount Meru shook; by the footsteps of the Peacock, mountains crumbled to dust; and the seas, filled with this dust became raised grounds."

"Due to the motion of the Cock's wings, the oceans tore away, the sky broke, the stars dropped and the mountains crumbled."

"O Lord Yama! I am the devotee of the Lord (Skanda) of Tiruchchendur. I have the sword of wisdom called 'non-enmity', with which I shall attack you and put you down with your weapons of 'Sula' and 'Danda'. Come close to me and see (what happens to you), if you like!"

"O mind, knowing the transitory nature of wealth, when will you go beyond pleasure and pain? You do not repeat the Names of the Lord, as Vel-Murugan, Vel, etc. How do you hope to get Mukti or liberation?"

"O Hero (Muruga) who destroyed Surapadma! Though I might be immersed in sex, I shall not forget Thy Vel!"

"By the touch of the Feet of Murugan, Brahma's written words on my head (fate) have been wiped out!"

"To Siva, the ornament is a garland of skulls; to Vishnu, the Tulasi-garland; to the Feet of Murugan, the crown of the Devas' heads and the Kadamba-garland; and to the Vel, the ocean, Surapadma and the Krauncha mountain."

"O Yama! I am in the presence of Lord Murugan. If you oppose me, I shall cut you with the Sakti-sword in my hand and make you run away. Therefore, trace your way back."

"Learned men will say: 'The body is perishable, wealth is transitory.' But if one approaches them for charity, they

will quietly slip away. These are people who have no devotion to Vel-Murugan. Wonderful is their wisdom!"

"O Yogis! There is no use of torturing the body through Hatha Yoga. Knowing what Siva Yoga is through the Upadesa of Murugan, if you become 'silent', you will attain Mukti."

"O Yogis who do hard Yoga-practices! If you meditate on the Lotus-Feet of the Beloved of Valli Devi, you shall easily attain Mukti."

(3) *Tiru Vaguppu*: This is a work with 25 sections, each one specially devoted to portray the greatness of the different aspects of or matters connected with the Lord,—His Feet, His devotees' gang, His principal weapon *Vel*, His consort Valli, His twelve divine hands, His eye's grace-glance, Arunagiri's Tiruppugazh, etc. Unlike the other works, since each section deals with a particular subject, it is called *Tiru-Vaguppu*. *Vaguppu* means section or a group of verses and *Tiru* means Divine or pertaining to the Divine.

It is held by many that the first 18 sections are only Arunagiri's and that the remaining sections are later interpolations.

The noteworthy feature of this work is that there is no mention about sex and fear of death, which two subjects are to be seen invariably in all the other works of Arunagiri. Hence many are of the opinion that this work should have been given by Arunagiri after becoming the parrot. As we have seen earlier, the word *Sukha* seems to refer to the state of attainment (Ananda) rather than a parrot, and as such we may also say that this work was given after Arunagiri's attaining Illumination and hence there is no mention of sex and fear of death in this work. But, then, will it mean that he gave his other works before attaining Illumination? It cannot be; because referring to Arunagiri, Thayumanavar clearly says: "*Kandar Anubhuti Petru Kandar Anubhuti Sonna*"—"The *Kandar Anubhuti* which was given after attaining Anubhuti or direct Experience of Lord Skanda." Thayumanavar does not refer to any other work except the

Kandar Anubhuti. And, strangely enough, in that *Kandar Anubhuti* work, there are depicted the pitiable conditions of being tormented by lust, as also fear of death. How strange! The reason is that, as I have tried to explain under the heading "The Need for an Esoteric Significance (*in Kandar Anubhuti*)," it was given from the standpoint of a *Sadhaka*, to help him attain *Anubhuti*. Similarly, unless we hit at the esoteric or secret purpose behind each work of Arunagiri, which is a matter for research, nothing definite can be said about his works, conclusively, as to which was given before or after becoming a parrot. And the whole issue will be nullified, if we are to accept that Arunagiri never became a parrot, which is a matter of doubt, and which, as we have seen earlier, seems to be untenable for many reasons.

(4) *Kandar Anthadi*: This is a work of 100 verses. Each verse is of four lines and mostly all the lines of every verse begin with the same words with, of course, different meanings. *Anth* means end and *Adi* means beginning, and *Anthadi* is a particular type of work wherein the last word or phrase of the previous verse forms the beginning of the next verse,—the *Anth* or end of a verse is the *Adi* or beginning of the following verse.

It is believed that this work was the outcome of the literary contest between the learned but arrogant Villiputturar and the devout and divine-inspired Arunagiri. The condition was, it is said, that Arunagiri should compose *Anthadi* songs without interruption and Villiputturar should at once give their meaning, and he who failed to do so would have to accept defeat. As it was composed mainly for the purpose of a literary competition, the language and style are so hard as to baffle even learned scholars, and one can imagine their toughness from the fact that Villiputturar who had won over all the Tamil poets and *Pandits* of his time failed even to decipher the 54th song whose four lines comprising 97 letters are composed of letters of only the *Tha-Varga*, i.e. *Tha*, *Thaa*, *Thi*, *Thii*, *Thu*, *Thuu*, etc. Only Arunagiri could give its meaning and even to this date no one

attempts to comment on it, except to reproduce Arunagiri's word-to-word meaning.

The purpose of the work being clearly known to us, we can account for its toughness, etc. Similarly if we are to know of the purpose of the other works, too, we can correctly account for the peculiarities in them; but not till then.

(5) *Kandar Anubhuti*: It is a work of 51 verses. It is held in high esteem as a *Mantra-Sastra* and as the crowning glory of Arunagiri's works, because of its high spiritual value and depth. The verses are short, rather the smallest in all the works of Arunagiri, but they are the most sublime. As the title suggests, it is a work on (the attainment of) God-Experience. Much need not be said about this book, as the present work is devoted to its exposition.

There are certain editions of the *Kandar Anubhuti* with 100 verses, but the last 49 verses are generally rejected as later additions by someone and not Arunagiri's words.

(6) *Vel Viruttam*: This is a work of 10 poems. The *Vel* is glorified by Arunagiri in all his works in a scattered manner. Not being satisfied with them, Arunagiri seems to have chosen to dedicate a small work exclusively to sing the praises, glory, greatness and the valorous achievements of the *Vel*.

(7) *Mayil Viruttam*: *Mayil* means Peacock,—the *Va-hana* or vehicle of the Lord. This work, like the *Vel Viruttam*, is devoted to the glorification of the Peacock which has also been described in Arunagiri's different works. This also is a work of 10 poems.

(8) *Seval Viruttam*: *Seval* means Cock; and it is the banner-symbol of Lord Murugan. This work consists of 11 poems and deals with the greatness of the banner which is scatteredly described in the other works of the Saint.

(9) *Tiru Ezhu Kootrirukkai*: This is a single poem; it comes under the category of Chitra-Kavi; it consists of numbers one to seven in ascending and descending orders (as 1; 1-2-1; 1-2-3-2-1; 1-2-3-4-3-2-1; etc.) and is capable of being portrayed or encased in a drawing. It is a rare piece of work, the like of which is composed by a few poets only.

INTRODUCTION

Kandar Anubhuti is a deeply philosophical and spiritual treatise, with profound mystical import, of Saint Arunagiri-nathar, who stands unique among the devotee-saints of the Tamilnadu.

‘*Kandar*’, in Tamil, is ‘*Skanda*’ in Sanskrit; it is one of the Names of the spiritual son of Lord Siva, some of His other Names being Shanmukha, Karttikeya, Guhan, Velayudhan, Murugan, etc. He is the younger brother of Lord Sri Ganesa.

‘*Anubhuti*’ is rather a Sanskrit term used in the Tamil language as well in the same sense, i.e., direct or immediate Experience of God, and it denotes the spiritual union of the soul with God. It usually implies the highest non-dual or Advaitic realisation. It is *Sakshatkara* or direct experience. Hence, *Kandar Anubhuti* would mean the Immediate or Direct Divine Experience of Lord Skanda. And, to Arunagiri, Lord Skanda is not merely a personal deity or Ishta Devata but the Supreme Absolute Itself, as he himself reveals in many verses, particularly in verses 2, 13, 28 and 49. Hence we may say that ‘*Kandar Anubhuti*’ means, in simple terms, “God-Experience”.

Saint Arunagiri is the author of many poetic works, of which the *Kandar Anubhuti* is his masterpiece. Though it is a small work of 51 verses or stanzas, it is very rich in spiritual wisdom and is full of deep significance. It is a treasure of rare knowledge to seekers of Truth and a mine of devotion to lovers of God. It is an unusual work of a mysterious synthesis of *Bhakti* and *Jnana*, of devotion and knowledge,—the one overlapping the other; at once touching the heart and igniting pure emotions as well as provoking deep thought and transcending the intellect. Suffice it to say that it is

regarded as a *Mantra-Sastra* or a treatise of mystic imports and has been placed on par with the well-known *Mantra-Sastra* of *Tiru-Mantiram*,—a treatise of 3,000 verses of Saint Tirumular, who used to remain absorbed in Samadhi for one full year, only to rise from it to give one verse and remain absorbed again. The *Tiru-Mantiram* is the 10th book of the *Panniru Tirumurai* of the Saivaites, i.e., the 12 sacred Saiva works. Correspondingly, the *Kandar Anubhuti* is regarded as the 10th book of the *Panniru Tirumurai* of the followers of Lord Murugan. Thus, the glory and greatness of the work can be understood in a measure, though to realise it in full measure it has to enter into one's being and become part of one's own experience.

It is rightly believed that the work *Kandar Anubhuti* contains in itself, explicitly and impliedly, many Mantras. The Names of the Lord, such as *Murugan*, *Kanda*, *Shanmukha*, *Guhan*, *Velava*, are Mantras by themselves; and the work is replete with these Names of the Lord. Further, in many verses there are Mantras in the form of mystic formulae. For instance, '*Velum Mayilum Thunai*' in verse 1, '*Naa-thaa Kumaraa Namah*' in verse 36, '*(Naan) Iraiyoona Parivaaram*' in verse 37, '*Guruvaai Varuvaai Arulvaai Guhane*' in verse 51,—the details about which can be found in the explanations of the verses. There is also another reason why the *Kandar Anubhuti* is regarded as a *Mantra-Sastra*. '*Mananaat Traayate Iti Mantrah*'—that by the *Manana* or reflection of which one is saved or released (from Samsara) is a Mantra. Truly, a deep reflection and meditation on this mystic work and its imports liberates one from bondage.

The *Vel* of Lord Skanda, which is identical with Him, is a mystic Divine weapon with which He destroyed the Asuras. The *Vel* which is Wisdom-Absolute also annihilates the inner Asuras or enemies of *Avidya*, *Kama* and *Karma*, and liberates the Jiva from transmigration. The *Vel* is a mysterious divine power and is referred to by Saint Arunagiri as the *Mantra-Vel* in one of his *Tiruppugazh* songs. And, out of the 51 verses of the *Kandar Anubhuti*, there is a

direct invocation to the *Vel* in 25 verses. For this reason as well, the work is regarded as a Mantra-Sastra.

Thus being replete with the Names of the Lord, which are Mantras; containing many mystic formulae (Mantras) in its bosom, a reflection or repetition of which liberates one from Samsara; being filled with invocations to the *Vel* which is mystic in nature, which destroys Avidya; a daily recitation of this marvellous Mantra-Sastra, the Kandar Anubhuti, is capable of bestowing on one whatever one honestly seeks and exactly in the manner one seeks. Hence, to the devotees of Lord Skanda, the Kandar Anubhuti is a holy book for daily *Parayana* or devout recitation and there are devotees even today who can narrate their personal experiences and the miraculous protection received by them from the Lord by resorting to the repetition of a single verse or even a part of a verse from the Kandar Anubhuti. We may, in passing, refer to one or two such instances.

(1) A devotee, who used to do daily *Parayana* of the Kandar Anubhuti, was proceeding from one village to another through a jungle-path. He was suddenly accosted by a thief. The devotee plucked the stem of a betel-leaf which he was carrying and uttering the phrase '*Tholaipatturuvath Thodu Velavane*', meaning: "O Lord Velayudha, who despatched the *Vel* as to pierce (through the heart of the Asura Surapadma)" (last line of verse 4), shot it on the thief. Lo! the betel-stem acted as the *Vel* and killed the thief on the spot.

(2) The Saiva Siddhanta Maha-Samajam, Madras, has published a book entitled "*Kandar Anubhuti*", in Tamil, with the original verses, their respective *Yantras* or *Chakras* and Mula-Mantras. Its author is Sri M.P. Thyagaraja Mudaliar, B.A., who was the Assistant Secretary of the Samajam. He was initiated into the verses and the *Yantras* by a Sannyasin who had attained great Siddhis in them and to whom the *Yantras* and Mula-Mantras were revealed in meditation. The author has narrated an interesting incident in his book, as follows:

It was in the year 1956. An American, Mr. Edward James, was doing Devi Upasana and had some obstacles in his practices. He wrote from America to the revered Mudaliar to suggest some means to overcome the obstacles. In his reply, Sri Mudaliar hinted at the need for invoking Lord Ganesa's grace to overcome the obstacle and advised him to repeat the first verse of the Kandar Anubhuti (*Aadūmpari Vēl.....*) together with its Mula-Mantra and Yantra. Mr. James acted accordingly and in about three months' time he had a mysterious experience. He wrote: "While I was thus meditating, an elderly person, clad in pure white clothes and with a *Kamandalu* in his hand, surrounded by elephants, appeared in my room, and poured from his Kaman-dalu a little holy water into my mouth and that of my wife who was also in meditation. Then everything disappeared into a mass of light. Since then I am totally transformed and I continue my Devi Upasana without any impediment."

From the above incidents, we can imagine the immense benefits that could be derived from a systematic Parayana of the Kandar Anubhuti, daily. If a line in a verse or a single verse can do so much, what cannot be achieved from a recitation of the whole work? While the repetition of a particular verse with its Mula-Mantra and Yantra bestows such results, an unselfish, daily recitation of all the 51 verses without any expectation from the Lord does not only remove one's physical and psychological ills, and protect one from all dangers, but also bestow on one the higher blessings of pure love of God and Divine Wisdom as well, is my own conviction and experience.

To my knowledge, there is no commentary on the Kandar Anubhuti available in English, though I understand that more than 25 years ago someone published a bare translation of it, but of this no information or copy can now be had.

There are, of course, many commentaries available, in Tamil, on this great work and each one has a specific purpose or is characterised by certain predilections. Thus there are commentaries purely for students, direct and simple, so

as to enable them to understand the meaning even as they recite the verses; for the masses, delivered as a series of talks and subsequently edited and published; for scholars, with profuse quotations from the different Tamil works; for devotees, extolling the glory and greatness of the Lord by recounting His divine deeds with anecdotes and stories so as to instil faith in their hearts; and so on and so forth. There are again commentaries based on the Saiva Siddhanta philosophy as well as on the Vedanta philosophy. My effort is to interpret and explain the verses mainly from the viewpoint of a Sadhaka or a seeker of Truth, so as to be helpful to them in their practices, rather than to be literary or academic. Hence, much searching analysis in an attempt at finding the rationale behind the pithy phrases, words and declarations used in the verses has been made in order to create the needed conviction in the minds of seekers, which unshakable conviction is a great asset to Sadhakas to be steady in their practices and plod on till the Goal is reached. Here I may mention that, to me, the Kandar Anubhuti is a treatise purely spiritual in nature and so it does not admit of any kind of low and whimsical interpretations, just to please the people. It is a holy book and has, therefore, to be treated in a holy manner, with due fervour and devotion. Even if it might seem out of the way and far-fetched, it would be befitting and advisable to direct our efforts to try to understand the Saint's mind and his purpose in giving such a work to the world and explaining the verses in a divine manner, raised above the sensuous and worldly views. As they say, "It is better to aim at a lion and miss it, than hunt a jackal and catch it." Hence my effort has been to interpret and explain the verses purely from a spiritual seeker's point of view, to be commensurate with the title of the work and the *purpose* for which Saint Arunagiri gave it to the world,—to help others too to attain that Bliss which he himself enjoyed. Not much of scholarship, erudition, literary worth or grammatical perfection may, therefore, be found in this book, as more importance and attention has been given to see that the explanations are of practical utility to seekers and pro-

vide the needed understanding and strength to encounter the day-to-day struggle with their lower nature, overcoming them gradually and finally to attain the Goal of God-Experience. My efforts would be amply rewarded even if one seeker is helped a bit in his onward march to the Goal. Of course, it goes without saying that I have derived the greatest benefit in writing this commentary, as many great truths and secrets have been revealed to me in the course of my effort at this task.

May the Grace of Lord Skanda illumine our path and crown our endeavours with success, is my honest prayer.

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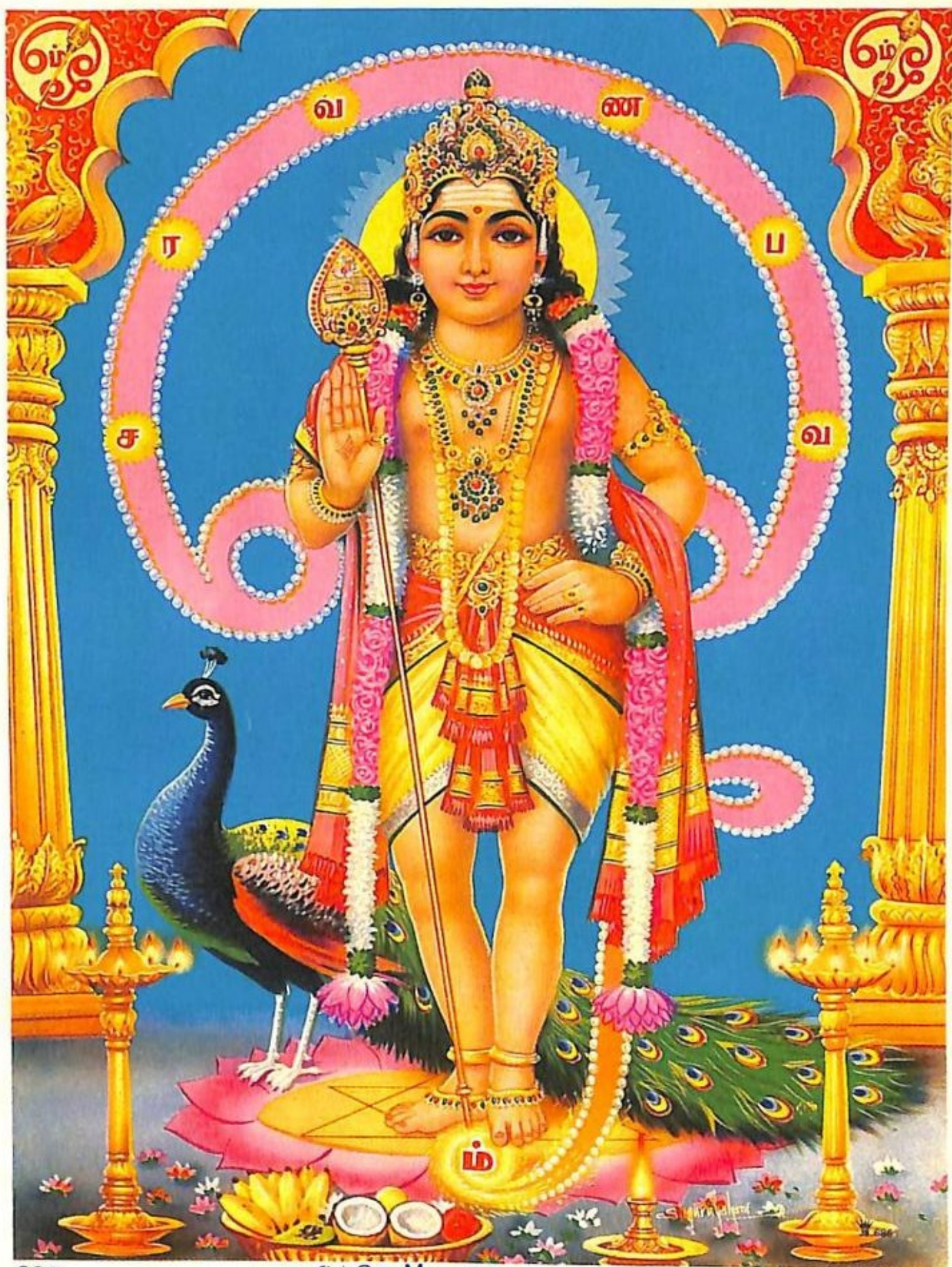
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Sri Om Murugan

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MADRAS - 600 003



SAINT ARUNACIRINATHAR
(Holy Image at Tiruttani, Tamilnadu)

KANDAR ANUBHUTI

(Original Verses in Tamil)



வேலும் மயிலும் துணை

கந்தர் அனுபுதி

காப்பு

நெஞ்சக்கனகல்லு நெகிழ்ந்(து) உருகத்
தஞ்சத்தருள் சண்முகனுக்(கு) இயல்சேர்
செஞ்சொற் புனைமாலை சிறந்திடவே
பஞ்சக்கரவாணை பதம் பணிவாம்.

நூல்

ஆடும் பரிவேல் அணிசேவல் எனப்
பாடும் பணியே பணியாய் அருள்வாய்
தேடும் கயமா முகனைச் செருவில்
சாடும் தனியாணை சகோதரனே.

1

உல்லாச நிராகுல யோக விதச்
சல்லாப விநோதனும் நீ அலையோ
எல்லாமற என்னை இழந்த நலம்
சொல்லாய் முருகா சுரபு பதியே.

2

வானோ புனல்பார் கனல் மாருதமோ
ஞானோ தயமோ நவில்நான் மறையோ
யானோ மனமோ எனையாண்ட இடம்
தானோ பொருளாவது சண்முகனே.

3

வளைபட்டகைம் மாதொடு மக்களெனும்
தளைபட்டழியத் தகுமோ தகுமோ
கிளைபட்டெழு சூருரூழ் கிரியும்
தொளைபட்டுருவத் தொடு வேலவனே.

4

மகமாயை களைந்திட வல்லபிரான்
முகமாறு மொழிந்தும் ஒழிந்திலனே
அகமாடை மடந்தையர் என்றயரும்
சகமாயையுள் நின்று தயங்குவதே.

5

திணியான மனோசிலை மீ(து) உனதாள்
அணியார் அரவிந்தம் அரும்புமதோ
பணியாளன வள்ளிபதம் பணியும்
தணியா அதிமோக தயாப்ரனே.

6

கெடுவாய் மனனே கதிகேள் கரவா(து)
இடுவாய் வடிவேல் இறைதாள் நினைவாய்
சுடுவாய் நெடுவேதனை தூள்படவே
விடுவாய் விடுவாய் வினையாவையுமே.

7

அமரும்பதி கேள் அகமாம் எனுமிப்
பிமரங்கெட மெய்ப்பொருள் பேசியவா
குமரன் கிரிராச குமாரி மகன்
சமரம்பொரு தானவ நாசகனே.

8

மட்டுர்குழல் மங்கையர் மையல்வலைப்
பட்டுசல்படும் பரிசென்(று) ஒழிவேன்
தட்டுடறவேல் சயிலத்(து) எறியும்
நிட்டுர நிராகுல நிர்ப்பயனே.

9

கார்மாமிசை காலன்வரில் கலபத்(து)
ஏர்மாமிசை வந்தெதிரப் படுவாய்
தார்மார்ப வலாரிதலாரி எனும்
சூர்மாமடியத் தொடு வேலவனே.

10

கூகாஎன என்கினை கூடி அழப்
போகாவகை மெய்ப்பொருள் பேசியவா
நாகாசல வேலவ நாலுகவி
த்யாகா சுரலோக சிகாமணியே.

11

செம்மான் மகளைத் திருடும் திருடன்
பெம்மான் முருகன் பிறவான் இறவான்
சும்மாஇரு சொல்லற என்றலுமே
அம்மா பொருளொன்றும் அறிந்திலனே

12

முருகன் தனிவேல்முனி நம்குருவென்(று)
அருள்கொண்(டு) அறியார் அறியுந் தரமோ
உருவன்(று) அருஉன்(று) உளதன்(று) இலதன்(று)
இருளன்(று) ஒளியன்(று) என நின்றதுவே.

13

கைவாய் கதீர்வேல் முருகன் கழல்பெற்(று)
உய்வாய் மனனே ஒழிவாய் ஒழிவாய்
மெய்வாய்விழி நாசியொடும் செவியாம்
ஐவாய்வழி செல்லும் அவாவினையே.

14

முருகன் குமரன் குகன்என்று மொழிந்(து)
உருகும் செயல்தந்(து) உணர்வென்(று) அருள்வாய்
பொருபுங்கவரும் புனியும் பரவும்
குருபுங்கவ எண்குண பஞ்சரனே.

15

பேராசைஎனும் பிணியில் பிணிபட்(டு)
ஓராவினையேன் உழலத் தகுமோ
வீரா முதுசூர்பட வேல் எறியும்
சூரா சுரலோக துரந்தரனே.

16

யாமோதிய கல்வியும் எம்மறிவும்
தாமேபெற வேலவர் தந்ததனால்
பூமேல் மயல்போய் அறமெய்ப் புணர்வீர்
நாமேல் நடவீர் நடவீர் இனியே.

17

உதியா மரியா உணரா மறவா
விதிமால் அறியா விமலன் புதல்வா
அதிகா அநகா அபயா அமரா
வதிகாவல சூர பயங்கரனே.

18

வடிவும் தனமும் மனமும் குணமும்
குடியும் குலமும் குடிபோகியவா
அடியந்தமிலா அயில்வேல் அரசே
மிடியென்(று) ஒருபாவி வெளிப்படினே.

19

அரிதாகிய மெய்ப்பொருளுக்(கு) அடியேன்
உரிதா உபதேசம் உணர்த்தியவா
விரிதாரண விக்ரம வேளின்மயோர்
புரிதாரக நாக புரந்தரனே.

20

கருதா மறவா நெறிகாண எனக்(கு)
இருதாள் வனசந்தர என்றிசைவாய்
வரதா முருகா மயில் வாகனனே
விரதா சுரசூர விபாடணனே.

21

காளைக் குமரேசன் எனக் கருதித்
தாளைப் பணியத் தவம் எய்தியவா
பாளைக்குழல் வள்ளிபதம் பணியும்
வேளைச் சுரபூபதி மேருவையே.

22

அடியைக் குறியா(து) அறியாமையினால்
முடியக் கெடவோ முறையோ முறையோ
வடிவிக்ரம வேல் மகிபா குறமின்
கொடியைப் புணரும் குணபூதரனே.

23

கூர்வேல்விழி மங்கையர் கொங்கையிலே
சேர்வேன் அருள்சேரவும் எண்ணுமதோ
சூர்வேரொடு குன்றுதொளைத்த நெடும்
போர்வேல புரந்தர பூபதியே.

24

மெய்யேஎன வெவ்வினை வாழ்வை உகந்(து)
ஐயோ அடியேன் அலையத் தகுமோ
கையோ அயிலோ கழலோ முழுதும்
செய்யோய் மயிலேறிய சேவகனே.

25

ஆதாரம் இலேன் அருளைப் பெறவே
நீதான் ஒருசற்றும் நினைந்திலையே
வேதாகம ஞான விநோத மனோ
தீதா சுரலோக சிகாமணியே.

26

மின்னேநிகர் வாழ்வை விரும்பியயான்
என்னே விதியின்பயன் இங்கிதுவோ
பொன்னே மணியே பொருளே அருளே
மன்னே மயிலேறிய வானவனே.

27

ஆனா அமுதே அயில்வேல் அரசே
ஞானாகரனே நவிலத் தகுமோ
யானாகிய என்னை விழுங்கி வெறும்
தானாய் நிலைநின்றது தற்பரமே.

28

இல்லேஎனும் மாயையில் இட்டனை நீ
பொல்லேன் அறியாமை பொறுத்திலையே
மல்லேபுரி பன்னிரு வாகுவில் என்
சொல்லே புனையும் சுடர் வேலவனே.

29

செவ்வான் உருவில் திகழ்வேலவன் அன்(று)
ஒவ்வாத(து) என உணர்வித்த (அ)துதான்
அவ்வா(று) அறிவார் அறிகின்ற(து) அலால்
எவ்வா(று) ஒருவர்க்கு(கு) இசைவிப்பதுவே.

30

பாழ்வாழ்(வு) எனுமிப் படுமாயையிலே
வீழ்வாய்என என்னை விதித்தனையே
தாழ்வானவை செய்தனதாம் உளவோ
வாழ்வாய் இனிநீ மயில்வாகனனே.

31

கலையே பதறிக் கதறித் தலையூ(டு)
அலையே படுமா(று) அதுவாய் விடவோ
கொலையேபுரி வேடர்குலப் பிடிதோய்
மலையே மலைகூறிடு வாகையனே.

32

சிந்தாகுல இல்லொடு செல்வமெனும்
விந்தாடவி என்று விடப்பெறுவேன்
மந்தாகினி தந்த வரோதயனே
கந்தா முருகா கருணாகரனே

33

சிங்கார மடந்தையர் தீநெறிபோய்
மங்காமல் எனக்கு வரம்தருவாய்
சங்க்ராம சிகாவல சண்முகனே
கங்காநதி பால க்ருபாகரனே.

34

விதிகாணும் உடம்பை விடா வினையேன்
கதிகாண மலர்க்கழல் என்று அருள்வாய்
மதிவாணுதல் வள்ளியை அல்லது பின்
துதியா விரதா சுரபூபதியே.

35

நாதா குமரா நமவென்(று) அரனார்
ஓதாய் என ஓதிய(து) எப்பொருள் தான்
வேதாமுதல் விண்ணவர் சூடுமலர்ப்
பாதா குறமின் பதசேகரனே.

36

கிரிவாய்விடு விக்ரம வேல் இறையோன்
பரிவாரம் எனும் பதம் மேவலையே
புரிவாய் மனனே பொறையாம் அறிவால்
அரிவாய் அடியோடும் அகந்தையையே.

37

ஆதாளியை ஒன்றறியேனை அறத்
தீதாளியை ஆண்டது செப்புமதோ
கூதாள கிராத குலிக்கிறைவா
வேதாள கணம்புகழ் வேலவனே.

38

பாவேழ் சனனம்கெட மாயைவிடா
முவேடணை என்று முடிந்திடுமோ
கோவே குறமின்கொடி தோள்புணரும்
தேவே சிவசங்கர தேசிகனே.

39

வினை ஓடவிடும் கதிர்வேல் மறவேன்
மனையோடு தியங்கி மயங்கிடவோ
சுனையோ(டு) அருவித் துறையோடு பசும்
தினையோ(டு) இதனோடு திரிந்தவனே.

40

சாகா(து); எனையே சரணங்களிலே
காகா நமனார் கலகம் செயுநாள்
வாகா முருகா மயில் வாகனனே
யோகா சிவஞான உபதேசிகனே.

41

குறியைக் குறியாது குறித்தறியும்
நெறியைத் தனிவேலை நிகழ்த்திடலும்
செறிவற்ற(று) உலகோ(டு) உரை சிந்தையுமற்ற(று)
அறிவற்ற(று) அறியாமையும் அற்றதுவே.

42

தூசா மணியும் துகிலும் புனைவாள்
நேசா முருகா நினதன்(பு) அருளால்
ஆசா நிகளம் துகளாயின பின்
பேசா அநுபூதி பிறந்ததுவே.

43

சாடும் தனிவேல் முருகன் சரணம்
சூடும்படி தந்தது சொல்லுமதோ
வீடும் சுரர்மாமுடி வேதமும் வெம்
காடும் புனமும் கமழும் கழலே.

44

கரவாகிய கல்வியுளார் கடைசென்(று)
 இரவாவகை மெய்ப்பொருள் ஈசுவையோ
 குரவா குமரா குலிசாயுத குஞ்
 சரவா சிவயோக தயாபரணே.

45

எந்தாயும் எனக்கருள் தந்தையும் நீ
 சிந்தாகுலம் ஆனவை தீர்த்து) எனையாள்
 கந்தா கதிர்வேலவனே உமையாள்
 மைந்தா குமரா மறைநாயகனே.

46

ஆறாறையும் நீத(து) அதன் மேல் நிலையைப்
 பேறா அடியேன் பெறுமா(று) உளதோ
 சீறாவருசூர் சிதைவித் (து) இமையோர்
 கூறா உலகம் குளிர்வித்தவனே.

47

அறிவொன்(று) அறநின்(று) அறிவார் அறிவில்
 பிறிவொன்(று) அறநின்ற பிரான் அலையோ
 செறிவொன்(று) அறவந்த(து) இருளே சிதைய
 வெறிவென்றவரோ(டு) உறும் வேலவனே.

48

தன்னந்தனி நின்றது தான் அறிய
 இன்னம் ஒருவர்க்(கு) இசைவிப்பதுவோ
 மின்னும் கதிர்வேல் விகித்தா நினைவார்
 கின்னம் களையும் க்ருபைசூழ் சுடரே.

49

மதிகெட்(டு) அறவாடி மயங்கி அறக்
 கதிகெட்(டு) அவமே கெடவோ கடவேன்
 நதிபுத்திர ஞானசுகாதிப அத்
 திதிபுத்திரர் வீறடு சேவகனே.

50

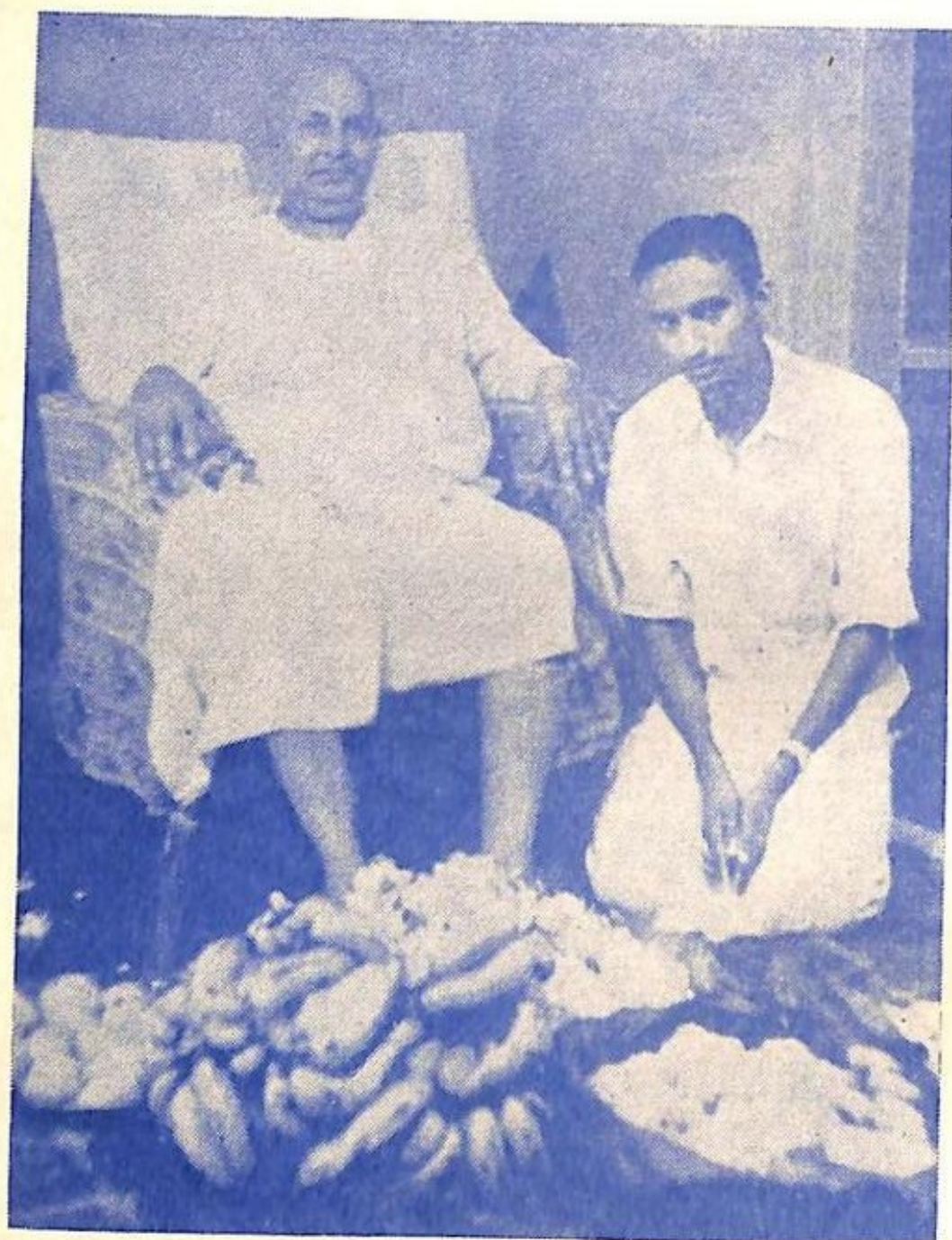
உருவாய் அருவாய் உளதாய் இலதாய்
 மருவாய் மலராய் மணியாய் ஒளியாய்
 கருவாய் உயிராய் கதியாய் விதியாய்
 குருவாய் வருவாய் அருள்வாய் குகனே.

51





H.H. SRI SWAMI SIVANANDA



Sri N.V. Karthikeyan at the Feet of
Sri Gurudev, after a Pada-Puja

KANDAR ANUBHUTI
OR
GOD-EXPERIENCE
OF
SAINT ARUNAGIRINATHAR

KANDAR ANUBHUTI

KAAPPU

Nenjak Kanakallu Negizhn Durugat
Thanjattharul Shanmuganuk Kiyalser
Senchor Punaimaalai Siranditave
Panjak Karavaanai Padam Panivaam

*Even the hardened stony heart melts and liquifies
By the grace, to one that takes refuge, Shanmukha bestows;
That this sweet word-garland to Him be glorious
To the five-armed Lord's Feet bow let us.*

"Let us bow to the Lotus-Feet of the Five-armed Lord (Sri Vighneshvara) for the renown of this garland (Kandar Anubhuti), knit of beautiful Tamil language, to Lord Shanmukha, Who, on the one that takes refuge in Him, showers His Grace that liquifies and melts even a hardened stony heart."

EXPLANATION

Kaappu or the Invocatory Song is a poem of prayer for the removal of obstacles. It is customary to invoke the blessings of Lord Sri Ganesa for the success of one's undertaken task. Arunagiri, too, adorns his work *Kandar Anubhuti* with a *Kaappu*. Even in this poem, wherein he bows to the Lord of Five-arms (Sri Vighneshvara) invoking His grace for the successful completion of the work, he exquisitely glorifies Lord Skanda, as his love for Him was supreme.

This Invocatory Song is to obtain the blessings of Lord Sri Ganesa so that the work may be completed successfully, without any obstacles, and also for the *renown* of the work. This work will bring *renown* to those who sing, write, listen

to or read it, because they will enjoy the Grace of the Lord. Also, it will bring glory to the saint himself, to the Tamil language and to the Lord, too.

For the fame of *Kandar Anubhuti* let us bow to Lord Sri Ganesa of Five-arms. Tamil scriptures vividly describe the functions of the five arms thus: The hand with the stylus does the work of creation; that with the *Moduka* or sweet-ball, preservation; that with the *Ankusa* or goad, destruction; that with the *Paasa* or cord, veiling; and the trunk, the fifth arm, the work of bestowing Grace.

This work is a garland made of beautiful, sweet Tamil. Flower-garlands fade away by usage in a couple of hours or at the most in a few days. But this word-garland wafts more and more fragrance as days pass by, because more and more people will come to know of it, sing or read it and be benefited by it. Hence such word-garlands are more pleasing to the Lord than flower-garlands. In verse 29, the saint, therefore, says that the Lord is always wearing his garland of words.

The Lord blesses those that take refuge in Him even as the sun gives warmth to those who expose themselves to it. It is the nature of the sun to give warmth; so also is it the *Svabhava* or spontaneous nature of the Lord to melt the desire-hardened hearts of devotees, who take shelter under His Feet, repenting for their past wrongs, and surrender themselves totally, realising their helplessness and the greatness of the Lord.

SKANDA AVATARA

The Puranas recount the fight going on between the *Devas* (gods) and *Asuras* (demons) always. The *Devas* defeated the *Asura* repeatedly. The *Asuras*, Soorapadma, Simhamukha and Taraka, whom the demoness *Surasa* got through the sage Kashyapa by a deceitful marriage with him, did severe Tapas, propitiating Lord Siva and obtained from Him many boons with the power of which they invaded and captured Devaloka (Svarga) and subjected the

Devas to great humiliation. Soorapadma extracted from them even menial service, and as days passed by, his autrocities also increased. Unable to bear the torture any more, the Devas, under the leadership of Indra and headed by Vishnu and Brahma, approached Siva in Mount Kailasa for help. They surrendered themselves to the Lord and cried out to Him for immediate protection. Moved by compassion, Lord Siva assured them His help. As, however, the Lord again was absorbed in meditation, the Devas entreated *Kamadeva* (Cupid) to awaken the Lord from his Samadhi. Though unwilling, due to fear of the Lord, yet compelled by the Devas, Kama disturbed the Lord by his flowery arrows. Thus disturbed in meditation, the *Tejas* that flashed from His third eye burnt Manmatha. The Devas at once fell at the Lord's feet and prayed for help without any further delay.

As the Asura had obtained boons from Lord Siva, He could not kill him in His form as Siva. The Lord, therefore, assumed His original form of six faces and from the third eye of each face a Light (*Tejas*) emanated which filled all space. The Devas, bewildered at this unexpected happening, trembled in fear, but the Lord assured them safety and withdrew the Light into His own hands. He passed on that Light to *Vayu* (Wind-God) and *Agni* (Fire-God) commanding them to carry it to Ganga. But when they hesitated to receive it because of its mighty power, Lord Siva granted special power to them. *Vayu*, with the strength granted by the Lord, carried it somehow, with great difficulty, for some distance, and unable to carry it any further, gave it to *Agni*, who hurried and threw it into Ganga. Ganga was also unable to bear the power of the Light and she carried it on to a small pond surrounded by *Sara-shrubs*, called *Saravanappoigai*. Alas! nothing happened to the pond, but a wonder took place. Immediately on reaching the pond, the Light assumed the form of six beautiful babies, with Divine splendour, being lulled on six lotuses. Vishnu, Brahma and all the gods assembled there to witness this *Avatara* of Lord Subrah-

manya. They asked the six Karttika Devis to suckle the six babies and feed them, which they did. In the meantime, Lord Siva and Parvati arrived there, and when Parvati took the babies, they joined together into a single body with six faces and twelve hands. This is Lord *Shanmukha* or the Lord with six-faces whose nature it is to bless those who take refuge in Him, as that is the purpose of His Avatara. He is called Skanda,* 'the joined One', as the six babies joined and assumed a single form; He is called *Karttikeya*, as He was nursed by the Karttika Devis (3rd Constellation of the 27 Stars); He is called *Saravana-bhava*, as He was born in the pond of *Sara* plant (*Saravanappoigai*). The Lord has many other names, too. Since he was born of the third eye (Eye of Wisdom) of Lord Siva, He stands for Divine Knowledge and is an incarnation of Pure Consciousness. A remembrance of these facts will help us much in our study of the work of *Kandar Anubhuti*.

Kacchiyappa Sivachariar (about the 9th century A.D.) who was ordered by Lord Shanmukha to compose the work *Skanda Purana* in Tamil, by giving him the first line for his work, precisely and beautifully portrays the Lord's Avatara thus, in two verses:

"That Consciousness-Mass (Light) which is called the Supreme Brahman, which is formless, with form, beginningless. One and also the many,—That assumed a form with six grace-showering faces and twelve hands and took *Avatara* or Divine Incarnation as Murugan, for the redemption of the world."

"That ever-pure, Omnipresent and All-full Lord Siva Who cannot be comprehended by speech, or mind or even by the Vedas, assuming the form of six sweet babies, was gracefully seated on six lotuses in the *Saravanappoigai*."

The six faces represent the Spirit and the five elements, of which He is the Lord. The *Tejas* that filled space (ether)

*'Skanda' also means 'one who was ejected' or 'one who leaped out', referring evidently to the way of His emanation from Siva.

was carried by Vayu (air) and Agni (fire), thrown into the Ganga (water) and shoved into the pond (earth).

The six faces face the directions of East, West, North, South, upward and downward—which shows that His vision is everywhere, that He is all-pervading and all-knowing.

The six faces represent the six attributes of Bhagavan—*Jnana* (Wisdom), *Vairagya* (Non-attachment), *Kirti* (Fame), *Aishvarya* (Wealth), *Sri* (Prosperity) and *Bala* (Strength).

The six faces also represent the six *Chakras*, the plexuses or centres of spiritual energy in the astral body. Each face is of the form of the deity presiding over the respective Chakra, namely, Ganesa, Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra, Maheshvara and Sadasiva.

The glory of the six faces is indescribable, of which great details are given in Tamil scriptures.

To fulfil the purpose of the Avatara, Lord Skanda, after performing many *Bala-lilas* (Divine sportful plays in His childhood), assumed leadership (Senapati) of the Devas, attacked the Asuras and killed them all with His *Vel*, which represents *Jnana Sakti*. He released the Devas and restored them back to heaven. Indra offered his daughter *Deivayanai* in marriage to the Lord. *Deivayanai* stands for *Kriya Sakti*. He then married *Valli-Devi*, who represents *Ichha Sakti*. Thus Lord Skanda is the Lord of Saktis and confers all boons. He resides in the heart-cave of His devotees and is therefore known as *Guha*.

Lord Skanda is not merely a Commander-in-Chief of the Deva-army and a destroyer of Asuras, but the Supreme Being Himself who took Avatara for a specific purpose; even as Lord Krishna is not merely the son of Yashoda or the killer of Kamsa or the charioteer of Arjuna, but Bhagavan Himself, as revealed in the Bhagavad Gita. In fact this *Skandavatara* is perpetually going on in creation and in one's life. Whenever and wherever there is a need for the intervention of the Lord to set right things, He manifests Himself then and there in a manner necessary to tackle the

situation. He took Avatara as a small boy (Vamana) and not as the terrible Parasurama, or Lord Rama, or Lord Krishna to destroy Bali. Where a particular aspect of Him is sufficient to meet the particular situation, He will not manifest Himself more than what is necessary, though He is all prowess. He is the greatest economist, not more and not less, but what is just needed. Hence He often helps the devotees with the needed physical strength, intellectual understanding and even as material help from outside but does not manifest Himself and appear before them though they wish it, because it is not necessary. He appears in various forms and with different names at different times, with various powers to fulfil various purposes,—all from our standpoint,—but He is what He is, irrespective of what He appears to us or what we understand Him to be.

To fulfil the purpose of the Avatara, Lord Skanda, after performing many Rajas-Idas (Divine sporting plays in His childhood), assumed leadership (Senapati) of the Devas, attacked the Asuras and killed them all with His Vel, which represents Aham Sakhi. He released the Devas and restored them back to heaven. Indra offered his daughter Devayani in marriage to the Lord. Devayani stands for Kṛpā Sakhi. He then married Nāga-Devī, who represents Iśvara Sakhi. Thus Lord Skanda is the Lord of Sakhis and confers all boons. He resides in the heart-cave of His devotees and is therefore known as Guha.

Lord Skanda is not merely a Commander-in-Chief of the Deva-army and a destroyer of Asuras, but the Supreme Being Himself who took Avatara for a specific purpose. Even as Lord Krishna is not merely the son of Yashoda or the killer of Kansa or the charioteer of Arjuna, but Bhagavan Himself, as revealed in the Bhagavad Gita. In fact this Skanda-deva is perpetually going on in creation and in one's life. Whenever and wherever there is a need for the intervention of the Lord to set right things, He manifests Himself then and there in a manner necessary to tackle the

VERSE—1

Aadum pariVel Aniseval Enap
Paadum Paniye Paniyaa Arulvaai
Thedum Kayamaa Muganaich Cheruvil
Saadum Thaniyaanai Sagodarane

*'The dancing Peacock, Vel and the beautiful Cock',
Thus to sing, grant me this service as my holy task;
O Brother of Vinayaka peerless! Who in battle kills,
The searching Asura Gajamukha with face elephant's.*

"O Lord Subrahmanya, the (younger) brother of the peerless Lord Sri Ganesha who kills in battle the Asura Gajamukha who always searches (for the Devas who will face him in battle)! Grant me as my holy task the divine *Seva* of singing Thy praise as, 'The dancing Peacock, the Vel and the beautiful Cock'."

EXPLANATION

Kandar Anubhuti commences with this verse. The verse begins with the word '*Aadum*' which contains Akara, Ukara and Makara, meaning 'OM'. Thus the work commences with OM or Pranava, the sacred Mantra. Again, the first line of the Anubhuti '*Aadum Pari Vel Aniseval*' has in it hidden the great Mantra, in Tamil, '*Velum Mayilum Tunai*', which means 'The Vel and the Peacock are (my) protection or support.' The prayer of Arunagiri is for the blessedness of constantly repeating this great Mantra, '*Om Velum Mayilum Tunai*.'

The Peacock, in its dancing pose, symbolises Om. Vel stands for Pure Knowledge. The Cock announces in the early hours of the morning the advent of light or sun, and the divine Cock on the banner of the Lord indicates the

advent of Wisdom, *Jnana-Surya*. In that alerted condition of crowing, the cock looks more beautiful than otherwise; hence Arunagiri says 'the beautiful cock'. It is interesting to note that the saint has added the adjectives 'dancing' and 'beautiful' to the peacock and cock, respectively, but nothing to the *Vel* because the *Vel*, which is Pure Knowledge and identical with the Lord Himself, stands not in need of any adjectives; it gives value for everything, and nothing can add to its glory.

In some of the verses, the *Vel* is referred to as the 'Sharp-Vel', 'Incomparable-Vel', 'Victory-Vel', etc., but they are not adjectives to the *Vel*; they only denote that particular aspect of the *Vel* which is invoked, according to the context, in the respective verses.

Gajamukha was an Asura with an elephant's face, who had obtained boons of non-destruction from Lord Siva. His only work was to trouble the Devas in Svarga. The Devas represented their condition before Lord Siva. Once, Lord Siva and Parvati Devi entered the Mantra-mandapa (the house of Mantras wherein are 7 crore of Mantras) in Mount Kailasa and gracefully looked at the Samashti and Vyashti Pranavas. By this look of theirs the two Pranavas embraced each other and there arose the Divine Avatara of Lord Sri Ganesa, the form of Pranava. Lord Ganesa, under instruction of Lord Siva, fought with Gajamukha Asura. As he had boons of non-destruction by means of any *astra* or *sastra*, Lord Ganesa broke one of his two projecting teeth (tusk) and let it go to kill the Asura. When the tusk cleaved him, since he could not be killed due to his boons, he assumed the form of a bandicoot and proceeded to attack Lord Vigneshvara, who by His graceful look, made him His *Vahana* or vehicle. Lord Vigneshvara is, therefore, addressed as peerless, for He did an act which none else could do.

Singing the glories of the Lord, or Nama-Sankirtana, is a very effective form of Sadhana. It purifies the heart quickly. Saint Arunagiri himself is a standing proof of the position one could attain by singing the Lord's names and

His glories. He has tasted the bliss of Nama-Sankirtana and so prays to the Lord, to serve as an instruction to us, to grant that only boon of repeating His Names always.

[This is a work of Anubhuti or direct spiritual experience. It is all practice from the very beginning, because mere philosophising will lead the Sadhaka nowhere. Hence in the first verse itself the practical Sadhana of Nama Japa or Nama-Sankirtana (repetition of the Lord's Name and singing of His glories) is pointed out, by way of asking for that only boon. Unceasing remembrance of God, through Nama-Japa, Nama-Sankirtana, etc., is the beginning of Sadhana, is what is indicated in this verse.]

VERSE—2

Ullaasa Niraagula Yoga Vidach
Challaaba Vinodanum Nee Yalaiyo
Ellaamara Ennai Izhanda Nalam
Sollaai Murugaa Surabhoo Pathiye

*Are Thou not, O Lord! Bliss, pain-free and Yoga,
The Well-wishing, Good-speaking, as also the doer of Lila?
That all-ceasing and mine-losing Good—Moksha,
Pray, instruct me, O Muruga! O Lord of Devaloka!*

“O Lord, are You not (the Lord of) Bliss, freedom from pain, and Yoga, Who intends the Good and speaks the Good (to all), and does things as Divine Sport (*Lila*)? That ‘Good’ of ceasing from all (external attachments) and losing myself (within, in Thee)—instruct me, O Lord Muruga! O Lord of Devaloka!”

EXPLANATION

“Muruga, You are the Lord of the six attributes; pray tell me that ‘Good’ of freedom from attachment and egoism.” It is not the traditional six attributes of the Lord denoted by the term *Bhagavan* that the saint attributes to the Lord, but a set of quite different ones. What are these? God is Bliss. He is Happiness. He is Joy. Bliss is Satchidananda. It is the *Ananda* of the Consciousness of unlimited existence. God is infinite existence identical with absolute consciousness. Because of this, He is Ananda. It is Self-Bliss and not the happiness derived from something other than itself. We are also sometimes happy and joyful, but our happiness is mixed with pain. Even when we are happy over something, something else torments us from within. Also our happiness soon passes away, giving place to pain and bereavement. But God is not so. Hence, to clarify this, as it were, in the second attribute He is said to be free from pain also.

And what is this Happiness and freedom from pain due to? He is the Lord of Yoga, always in a state of Yoga, or union with everything. He is at-one with all things and everywhere, inseparable from anything. Nothing is separate from Him or outside Him. Hence there is no pain for Him, pain being caused by separation from beloved objects or non-attainment of loved objects, which question does not arise in the case of God. He is in 'Yoga' with all things.

Now, what does it matter to us, if God is Bliss, free from pain and everywhere? He is not merely these. He is the Lord of Yoga, too. He always intends our good. He is our well-wisher and so He speaks what is good for us, for which Arunagirinathar offers prayer. The Lord comes as our Guru and gives us Upadesa. We, in our ignorance do not know what is good for us, and often pray for those things which will bring us our own destruction. The Lord intends our good, speaks what is good and also does what is good for us. He appears as this vast creation, through His sportful *Lila*; and provides the needed field for the Jivas to have various experiences, and then He releases them from His Maya by an act of Grace.

Thus the Lord is Bliss, freedom from pain, and Yoga. This is His essential nature, as He is in Himself. The Lord is also good-intending, good-speaking and good-doing. This is what He is in relation to us. He appears as this vast creation, comes as our Guru, gives us Upadesa, reveals Himself to us and absorbs us into Himself. How He appears as the cosmos, etc., is a wonder, and we can only say that it is His *Lila* (divine sport), or *Vinodam* (diversion). Thus the Blissful and painless Lord of Yoga intends, speaks and does what is 'good' for us.

Among the innumerable places of worship of Lord Muruga, six are foremost and are called *Aarupadai Veedu*. These are Tirupparankundram (3 miles from Madurai), Tiruchchendur (down South, on the sea-shore), Tiruvavinankuti or Palani (near Dindugal), Tiruveragam or Swamimalai (near Kumbakonam), Kundru-

thoradal or Tiruttani (near Arakonam) and Pazhamuthir-solai (near Madurai). The six attributes of the Lord are said to denote these six places of worship. Further, these six places are also said to represent the six *Chakras* or plexuses in the body, which means that Subrahmanya is the Lord of the six Chakras. Again Lord Shanmukha is the Lord with six faces and each face confers on His devotees each attribute mentioned in this verse. (It does not however mean that the six faces are independent of each other or act separately).

“O Lord, are You not the Lord of these six attributes? (Yes.) Therefore tell me the ‘good’.” And what is that good? It is a twofold blessedness—that of ceasing from everything of the world and also losing oneself in God. This is the ‘good’, says the saint.

All things should cease, is the first state of blessedness. There are hundreds and hundreds of things in the world. Can we put an end to them all? Is it possible? No. Then, how do we cease from them? The only way is to withdraw ourselves from them. Hence the first step in Yoga is *Yama* or self-restraint, constituting *Ahimsa* (non-injury), *Satya* (truthfulness), *Brahmacharya* (all-round sense-control), *Asteya* (non-covetousness) and *Aparigraha* (non-acceptance of those things that are not necessary for one’s bare existence). When a total sense-control is effected, which implies also control of mind, what remains is the ego-principle or the ‘I’. This should also be lost. But where? The ego is the universal asserting itself in a particular, just as the crest of the wave is the sea-water rising in a particular place. As the wave-crest sinks into the ocean, the ‘I’-consciousness loses itself in God-consciousness. Thus, all-ceasing and mine-losing covers the entire course of Sadhana, that of withdrawal from externality and absorption in God, which is the ‘good’, says Arunagirinathar.

One may wrongly construe that ceasing from all external activity and losing oneself may mean a negative state of sleep, swoon or void, wherein also these are absent. No,

says the saint. That state is, therefore, emphasised as 'good'. Sleep, swoon, etc., are states not 'good', because they do not lead one to union with God, but revert one to the same miserable condition in which one was before going to these states. So, it is absorption in God, and not going to sleep, etc., that is indicated.

The only good is God; all others which we consider as good are only 'goods'. Therefore, losing oneself in God is good, not losing oneself in the world, because, the world is a source of pain and misery; and God is the source of Bliss, of freedom from pain and of Yoga.

When one attains this good, he becomes a saint; and saints also possess the six attributes of God mentioned in the verse. They are ever blissful, they are always free from pain and ever absorbed in Yoga; they are intent upon the good of the world and speak to people what is good to them. They do good to them in various ways, as participants of the Divine Lila. This is so because saints are representatives of God on earth; in and through them God works here.

[Now Sadhana has been commenced. But two things are essential and must be clear to the mind at the outset, namely, the *goal* to be attained, and *its nature*. So the saint has given these in the second verse—that 'Good', or attainment of God, or Moksha is the goal. And what is the nature of that 'Good'? He makes this also clear by giving the six attributes of the Lord. That God is the goal and He is bliss, etc., for which we should pray and strive for should be impressed upon the mind of the aspirant, lest he should be side-tracked or attracted to something else, such as name and fame, Siddhis, etc., is the instruction of this verse.]

VERSE—3

**Vaano Punal Paar Kanal Maarudhamo
Jnaano Dhayamo Navilnaan Maraiyo
Yaano Manamo Yenaiyaanda Yidam
Thaano Porulaavadhu Shanmugane**

Is it earth, water, fire, ether or air?

Is it sense-knowledge, or the uttered Vedas four?

Is it the 'I' principle, the mind, or the county

Where I was accepted, O Shanmukha! What is Reality?

“O Lord Shanmukha! What is it that can be called the Eternal Verity? Is it the earth, water, fire, air or ether; or that state in which (sensory) knowledge arises; or the four Vedas that are uttered (by mouth); or the 'I' principle; or the mind; or the place where You (appeared as my Guru and) accepted me?”

EXPLANATION

A thought-provoking verse! What is Reality? The immediate reality (to the senses) is the world outside consisting of the *Maha Bhutas* or the five great elements, viz., earth, water, fire, air and ether. Are these elements the Reality? No; because these are changing in character, while Reality is unchanging and Eternal. Or, is it the knowledge that one obtains from the world? No. Here knowledge refers to sense perception. Is it the four Vedas that the Guru teaches to the disciple? No. Even the Vedas return, unable to reach the Reality. Is it the ego that asserts itself in everything, everywhere? No. Much less is it the mind that acts on the report of the senses. None of these is Reality because all these are modifications of Prakriti which, by its very nature, is ever changing.

What, then, is Reality? “It is the place where,” says

saint Arunagiri, "I have been accepted." The 'I' which the saint refers to may either mean himself or the ego-principle 'I'. When Arunagirinathar dropped himself down from the Temple tower, Lord Muruga appeared before him as his Guru and accepted him, which happened at Tiruvannamalai in South India, now made famous by Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi. Tiruvannamalai is the place where the egos of Brahma and Vishnu were put an end to by Siva. Thus, 'where I have been accepted' means that where the ego accepts its defeat or inability to know the Real, there Reality stands revealed.

Once, Vishnu and Brahma had a debate wherein each attributed Supreme Lordship to himself, but they could not decide the matter. Finally finding no other means, they decided to settle the issue by a fight,—He who would win was to be regarded as the Supreme. The fight began and went on for several years and there seemed to be no end to it. Now Siva, wanting to put an end to their fight, appeared before them as a huge column of Light which flabbergasted them and, curious to know what it is, they stopped their fight. Then a voice was heard: "Why do you vainly quarrel over your superiority? Lord Siva only knows your strength. He who finds either the origin or summit of this Light is the Supreme Lord." At once Vishnu, assuming the form of a huge boar, went into the earth to find the bottom; and Brahma, taking the form of a huge swan, soared high in the skies to see the top of the Light. The more they searched, the farther was the Light seen. They were exhausted and failed in their attempts. At once the Light appeared as Siva before them, seeing whom their ego vanished and they stood accepting Siva as the Supreme Lord. The Lord again disappeared and only the huge column of Light was there, which gradually condensed itself into a mountain. This is the *Arunachala* mountain at Tiruvannamalai where saint Arunagiri was accepted by Lord Murugan. This is said to have happened on a Mahasivaratri day.

The ego fails in its attempt to know what Reality is.

Where the ego ceases, there the Reality reveals itself. The ego is active and intact in its search for Reality in the outer world, in sense-knowledge, in the mental functions and even in intellectual understanding, though in subtler and subtler degrees. But when it recedes into the innermost recesses of the heart, it melts and vanishes into its source, as a salt-doll that enters the ocean trying to fathom its depth. Reality is lodged in the core of the heart, where the ego has no access. The Mahanarayanopanishad says: "In the centre of the body is the sinless (egoless) lotus of the heart, which is the abode of the Supreme Being. Further within that, is the Sorrowless ether (Reality)."

Cessation of ego is the revelation of Reality. To know the Knower is Knowledge.

"O Lord Shanmukha, reveal to me as to what Reality is," asks the saint. He addresses the Lord as Shanmukha, i.e., the Lord with six faces. It will be relevant to see what the saint has said about the six faces, in one of his *Thiruppugazh* songs:

"Riding on the Peacock, does divine sport one face;
Words of wisdom with Siva, does speak one face;
Devotees that pray, their *Karmas* does destroy one face;
To pierce the mountain, does despatch the *Vel* one face;
Soorapadma who took diverse forms, did destroy one
face;

To accept Valli Devi in marriage, did come one face.
Reveal, You should, the secret meaning of assuming
faces six

O Lord, enshrined in Arunachala, ancient and old."

Here also, after giving the meaning and purpose of the six faces, the saint still requests the Lord to reveal to him the true meaning of His six faces, and this he addresses to the Lord at Arunachala or Tiruvannamalai, which, as we have seen, is the place where the egos of Vishnu and Brahma were vanquished. By this the saint wants to show that our understanding of the meaning of six faces is all right so far as it goes, but the true significance of

it will be revealed only when and where the ego vanishes. That is why he has dedicated the song to the Lord at Arunachala, and not of any other place.

Thus when the saint wants to know the truth about anything, he makes reference to Arunachala, to show that it can be known or revealed only in that egoless state.

[The pithy prayer for the 'all-ceasing and mine-loosing Good' of verse 2 may be said to be expatiated upon in greater detail in this verse, whereby the Sadhaka is also shown the process of rational investigation into the nature of Reality and where It is to be realised.

Reality ever shines within, as the Self, and can be realised when the ego is relinquished, is the instruction of this verse to the aspirant.

It is interesting to observe that throughout this work of *Kandar Anubhuti* the saint brings about a blend of the heart and the head, a prayerful mood and an enquiring or investigating nature, Bhakti and Jnana, as an effective form of Sadhana. Thus the prayer of a Bhakta of the previous verse is immediately followed and strengthened by the investigative nature of the Sadhaka.]

VERSE—4

Valaipatta Kaim Maadhodu Makkalenum
Thalaipat Tazhiyath Thagumo Thagumo
Kilaipat Tezhusoor Uramum Giriyum
Tholaipat Turuvath Thodu Velavane

*Caught up in this fetter called wife and family,
Am I to perish? O Lord, is it fair, is it seemly?
The mountain and Soora's heart, who rose with retinue,
Thy Vel, Velayudha, You let go, that pierced through.*

“O Lord Velayudha! You despatched Your (Sakti) *Vel* as to pierce through the heart of the Asura Soorapadma, who, with his relatives, rose in battle against You, as also the mountain. (It being so) should I totally perish caught up in the entanglement of woman with bangle-arm (wife) and children (i.e., the bondage of household)? Is it fair, O Lord, is it fair?”

EXPLANATION

Surapadma, the powerful Asura, who had obtained many boons from Lord Siva, waged war with Lord Skanda with the help of his entire kith and kin. When all of them were destroyed and the Asura was left alone, he fought assuming various forms one of which was that of a huge mangotree with many shooting branches. The Lord cleaved the tree with the *Vel*. Thus Lord Subrahmanya pierced the Asura in battle, as if in sport, by the despatch of His Divine weapon, the *Vel*. This the saint refers to as, “O Lord who despatches the *Vel* as to pierce through Soora, who rose with his retinue, (or with many branches as a tree).”

Krauncha was one of the lieutenants of the Asura Taaraka, the younger brother of Surapadma. Krauncha

used to assume the form of a mountain, with many paths leading through it. When passers by (especially sages and pious men) entered the mountain through these paths, the mountain (the Asura) would close itself from all sides and kill the persons. This was his pastime. Once sage Agastya was going Southwards from the Himalayas under the instructions of Lord Siva. This Asura played the same trick with the sage, who, understanding it in time, through his intuition, cursed him to remain in the shape of the mountain itself till he came to be destroyed by the *Vel* of Lord Skanda, in the fullness of time. Lord Skanda, while leading the Deva-forces Southwards to attack Surapadma, met this Krauncha mountain and killed the Asura by a throw of His *Vel*.

The mountain referred to in the verse may also mean the *Ezhugiri*, or the sevenfold mountain that always followed Surapadma and helped him in many ways, which was also pierced by the *Vel* of the Lord.

The mountain represents *Karma* and Surapadma the ego (*Avidya*). As the mountain and the Asura could be killed only by the *Vel* of Lord Skanda, even so only *Jnana* or Knowledge can destroy *Karma* and *Avidya*. Therefore, the saint pleads, "O Lord, You destroyed the mountain and the Asura. Similarly, destroy my bondage of *Karma* and *Avidya*."

By ordinary human effort the bondage of Samsara cannot be broken. The attachment to wife and children is so strong that nothing but Divine grace can snap it. In this verse Arunagiri practically weeps before the Lord over his helplessness and invokes His grace to snap the ties of Samsara.

It is not that Arunagiri was really bound by the bonds of wife and children. He had already attained the supreme grace of Skanda and the whole *Kandar Anubhuti* is an ecstatic outpouring of his high spiritual illumination. We have, therefore, to understand that he places himself in the pitiable condition of people in common and prays. The beauty of the treatise is that Arunagiri has sung the verses in the first person

so that when we sing them, it becomes our prayer to the Lord. We are so ignorant that we do not know how to pray even. Left to ourselves, we would pray and ask for things which would prove to be harmful to us. Hence Arunagiri places himself in a common place position and prays as if we would pray so that we have only to repeat them. This verse is so worded that one cannot but be moved to tears by a repetition of it. A mere chanting of it will bring tears in one's eyes and also move the compassionate Lord. And the Lord's grace will snap the bonds of Samsara. Nothing but the Divine Grace is a help in this and nothing but a heart-moved, tear-flowing, weeping, invocatory prayer can draw the Lord's Grace. So Arunagiri prays: "O Lord Muruga, that powerful Krauncha and that mighty Surapadma were killed by You by a throw of Your *Vel*. Is it fair for You that I perish under the clutches of wife and children? And is it a big job for You to snap off this tie and release me?"

[In the previous verses Arunagiri made clear the goal to be attained, its nature, and the method of attainment. Here he points out the obstacles that stand in the way of the Sadhaka, the first and foremost of which is the bondage of family, the maintenance and care of which takes away all one's time and energy.

The aspirant who has commenced his Sadhana and has a clear conception of the Goal to be attained, now realises that wife and children are the immediate obstacles, in the sense that they are gross and external, and prays for their removal.

Objectively, family constitutes the bondage of a person, while subjectively *Karma* and *Avidya* bind the soul to Samsara or relative existence, all which can be put an end to by the Grace of God.]

VERSE—5

Magamaayai Kalaindhida Vallapiraan
Mugamaaru Mozhindhum Ozhindhilane
Agamaadai Madandhaiyar Enrayarum
Jagamaayaiyul Ninru Thayanguvadhe

*The Mahamaya, the Lord is capable of destroying,
His Name 'Shanmukha' though have I been uttering,
Home, wealth and women am I still eagerly thinking,
Freed am I not from this irksome Maya's suffering!*

“The Lord is capable of destroying the *Mahamaya*. Though I have been repeating His Names many times as ‘Shanmukha’, ‘Shanmukha’, alas! I am still thinking of home, wealth and women, and am not freed from the suffering of this world-delusion which is so irksome.”

EXPLANATION

The essence of *Maya* or this world-delusion is home, wealth and women (wife). These are so tiring and painful. Though one may be engaged in Japa, etc., yet their thought persists in the mind. This is called *Maya* or reasonless delusion, because though they are pain-giving the mind still goes for them and does not dwell upon the Lord Who is capable of freeing one even from the *Mahamaya* and bestowing upon the devotee Joy and Wisdom.

The Lord is capable of destroying the world-delusion. But even after repeating His Names, one is still not freed from the clutches of women, wealth and home. This is to show that the power of *Maya* is so great that one should not be satisfied with the repetition of the Lord's Name for sometime, but patiently continue the practice till the dawn of His grace. Grace emphasis is, therefore, laid by the saint on continued practice, with love and dedication, for a

long time, till the attainment of the Goal, which fact Maharshi Patanjali also stresses in his Yoga-Sutras.

Why has the world-delusion not left us, though we have been repeating His Name? The reason is simple. The mouth utters the Lord's Name but the mind is still centred in the objects of love. It relishes a secret desire for them in the heart. Hence Japa does not bring the desired result. Therefore mere Japa is not enough; the heart also should go with it to God. With the utterance of Japa, if the mind also thinks of the Lord without a second thought and the heart feels God, then it is that His Grace manifests which destroys *Maya*. Hence the saint, in verse 15, prays thus: "O Lord, when shall You bless me such that repeating 'Murugan, Kumaran, Guhan,' my mind will melt and the heart *feel* or experience You...." While he uses the word 'uttering' only in this verse, Arunagiri adds the words 'melting' and 'feeling' also in verse 15. Hence mere mechanical utterance is not enough, there should be *Bhava*. But this is the way, the beginning. When the practice is continued, in course of time the *Mantra-sakti* or Sadhana-power will make one's mind melt and the heart feel God within.

How beautifully Arunagiri portrays facts! It is true that the Lord is powerful enough to destroy *Mahamaya*, and it is also true that we are doing Japa of His Names. But it is all the more true that we are not freed from *Maya*. How strange? But this is the experience of everyone who actually practises Sadhana. It may be asserted theoretically that a single repetition of the Lord's Name 'can' destroy all one's delusion, and it may be true. Or, it may also be held that *Maya* has not left us because we have not uttered His Names and prayed to him. Well, this may also be true. But what is the actual state of affairs? Have all those who have uttered the Lord's Names been freed from *Maya*? No; not until the Grace of God manifests, for which the heart should melt and feel. This verse is the cry of a Sadhaka who has commenced doing some Sadhana. Arunagiri is not a dreamy theoretician. He states facts vividly and touchingly, for which art he is held in high esteem. Saint Taiyum-

anavar, wondering at this skill of Arunagiri, says, "O Arunagiri, my Lord and (spiritual) father! Is there anyone who has said words of fact as vividly as you have?....."

○ Arunagiri wants to lay great emphasis on the need for Sadhana. One may be fortunate enough to get initiation from a Guru or God, but that is not enough. The Guru or God gives the needed strength along with the initiation. But prolonged Sadhana has to be practised to obtain His grace. The old *Samskaras* are so deeply imbedded in the subconscious that they cannot be easily destroyed. The three *Eshanas* are very powerful to be overcome like that. They persist and refuse to be wiped out. Great effort is needed. Prolonged practice is called forth. Though the Lord's grace alone can destroy them, Sadhana is essential to draw the grace of the Lord.

The verse is also interpreted as:

1. "The Lord is capable of removing the *Mahamaya*. But alas, I have not uttered His Names as 'Shanmukha, Shanmukha'! Is it my lot to remain immersed in the wearisome Samsara by thinking of women, wealth and home!"

2. "The Lord is capable of destroying the *Mahamaya*. Though He gave me Upadesa with (not only one face but with) all His six faces, I am still thinking of home, wealth and women, and am not freed from the suffering of this world-delusion which is so irksome."

Whatever be the interpretation, it is clear that the Lord is capable of removing *Mahamaya*, and that the world-delusion has not left its hold on us because we have not whole-heartedly resorted to Him. Hence a sincere dedication, a whole-hearted application and a total offering of oneself to God till the dawn of His Grace is the way for freedom from Samsara.

This is the experience of every Sadhaka in the initial stages of Sadhana that inspite of his best efforts to control the mind (which is the seed of *Maya*), the irksome *Maya* does not leave him. It may also appear that all one's effort

will finally prove to be of no avail. Often, at this stage, Sadhakas get discouraged and even lose faith in God, and some even give up their practices as useless. But no, is what the saint wants to lay emphasis in this verse. One should persist with one's heart and soul, and with firm determination, as the Tamil saying goes, "Even if I am wiped out (of existence) I will not leave (the practice)."

[In spite of the prayer in the previous verse, the *Jagan-Maya* does not leave the seeker. He realises that this is so, not because the Lord is incapable but because his Sadhana is insufficient to draw Divine grace which demands further effort.]

VERSE—6

Thiniyaana Manosilaimēedhu Unathaal
Aniyaar Aravindham Arumbhumadho
Paniyaa Yena Valli Padham Paniyum
Thaniyaa Adhimoga Dhayaaparane

*On the hardened stony tablet of my heart
Will Thy beautiful Feet-Lotus manifest?
Asking for service, You bow to Valli's Feet,
O Lord of unquenching Love! O Grace Embodiment!*

“O Lord of unquenching love for Valli, at Whose Feet
You bow, enquiring of her orders! O Abode of infinite
Compassion! In this hardened stone-heart of mine, will
the beautiful Lotus of Your Feet blossom forth?”

EXPLANATION

Amritavalli and Sundaravalli were the two daughters of Vishnu. Once they went to *Kailasa*, the abode of Siva, where they happened to meet Lord Skanda. Enamoured of His beauty, they wanted to become His consorts and expressed their wish to the Lord. The Lord, an abode of compassion, accepted their proposals and ordered that the former be born as daughter of Indra, as *Deivayanai*, and the latter of Nambirajan, a hunter king, as Valli.

Due to a curse of Rishi Kanva, Vishnu and Lakshmi were roaming in a forest as Sivamuni (a dumb saint) and a deer, respectively. When Sivamuni once happened to see the deer, strangely enough, he felt attracted to it, which also returned the love. By these mutual love-looks of both, the deer gave birth to a female child. Finding the child so different from itself, the deer left it in a pit near a cluster of creepers called *Vallikkodi*. This child was found by Nambirajan, the hunter king, who was overjoyed to have it,

as he had no children. She was named as Valli. From her childhood Valli developed great love for Lord Muruga and was determined to marry none but the Lord. As she grew in age, her devotion to the Lord became more intense and only the thought of the Lord ever occupied her mind. This news was conveyed to the Lord by Devarshi Narada and the Lord also knew that the time to accept her had come. As was the custom with the hunters, she used to protect the corns in the fields, driving away the birds. Lord Skanda went of His own accord, in search of her, to the corn-fields, disguised as a hunter and as an old man, tested her devotion and finally revealed His identity. Later on, He married her.

“Not only did the Lord go to Valli;” says Arunagiri, “He also asked her for service.” The Lord not only unites the devotees with Himself, but also looks after their wants, Himself. Such is the Lord’s Compassion. Sri Krishna, in the Bhagavadgita, says, “*Yogakshemam Vahamyaham*”—“I look after My devotees’ *Yoga* and *Kshema*.”

Valli is regarded as the Universal Mother ever intent upon the welfare of the Jivas. She knows the state of purity and evolution of the Jivas and recommends to the Lord such matured souls as are fit for their release from Samsara, which the Lord is too pleased to do. Hence the Lord is said to bow to Valli’s Feet, asking for this service.

Arunagiri cites this in this verse to show that the love of the Lord for His devotee is so great that even if the devotee does not know or adopt the right Sadhana but only genuinely loves and wants God, He comes to him of His own accord and accepts him. Valli is the Jivatman that aspires for union with the Paramatman. Though she was determined to marry the Lord, she knew not where the Lord was and how to attain Him. Similarly, the Jivatman cannot find God by its own effort for the simple reason that it has no true knowledge of God; it is ignorant, being a product of *Avidya*. But if it sincerely aspires for God, He reveals Himself, when the proper time for it comes, as the Guru,

trains the disciple and also tests him, and finally absorbs the Jiva into Himself, as the Lord did with Valli. If the Jiva is sincere in its aspiration, God, in the form of the Guru, will guide the Jiva properly and see that it attains Him. God is infinite mercy and compassion. He is '*Dayaa-paran*',—an embodiment of Compassion and Grace.

The Lord's Feet are compared to Lotuses. It is implied here that our heart should melt in His love and become like soft earth, a condition which is necessary for the blossoming of the Lotus.

Arunagiri beseeches the Lord, saying "O Lord, You went of Your own accord to where Valli was (because, though she loved and wanted You, she knew not where You were and how to see You) and accepted her. Even so, kindly do manifest Thy Lotus Feet (Thyself) in my heart, which is hard like stone due to endless desires, and bless me."

Thus, if the Lord's Grace is prayerfully invoked from the bottom of the heart, appealing to His Grace-Embodiment aspect rather than to the philosophically true Maya-destroying aspect, He will be quickly pleased and come as one's Guru.

The word '*Thaniyaa*' may also mean 'The Lord Skanda enshrined at Tiruttani'.

[The aspirant further realises that his heart is hard like stone on account of which the Lotus of the Lord's Feet does not manifest itself. He appeals to the Lord's Grace-aspect.]

VERSE—7

**Keduvaai Manane Gadhikel Karavaadhu
Iduvaai Vadivel Iraithaal Ninaivaai
Suduvaai Neduvedhanai Thool Padave
Viduvaai Viduvaai Vinai Yaavaiyume**

*Means to salvation, O wretched mind! listen:
Give unreservedly, think of the Feet of Vel-Murugan;
Thus shatter to pieces this misery long-drawn,
And get freed for ever from all Karmas, soon.*

“O mind, (by taking the unreal, fleeting things of the world as real) you stand to suffer! Now, listen to this means for attaining salvation: Without holding, give in charity; (and) meditate on the Lotus-Feet of the Lord having the sharp-Vel! (By so doing, you will) burn to ashes the long-persisting misery of birth and death; and soon get freed from all *Karmas*.”

EXPLANATION

The mind is the cause of one's bondage and liberation. A proper education of it is, therefore, necessary. Hence the instruction to the mind.

The ignorant mind takes the fleeting objects of the world as something real, goes for them, gets entangled in them and in the end suffers miserably. This is *Vishaya-Chintana* or thinking of objects, which is the cause of its bondage. The Gita warns us of the disastrous effects of thinking of sense-objects. Thinking leads to attachment for objects, from attachment is born desire, from desire arises anger, from anger delusion, from delusion loss of memory and from loss of memory destruction of discrimination, and finally with the loss of discrimination the individual perishes. Hence the malady is to be cured at the root itself. The

mind should not be allowed to dwell upon objects. It is therefore advised to give away in charity whatever it has as its possession. But how is it to be given? Not with a feeling of remorse or grudge, but with love of God, i.e., not thinking of the object given, but of God. This is called *Bhagavat-Chintana*, *Atma-Chintana* or *Brahma-Chintana* which is an antidote to *Vishaya-Chintana*. When anything is given in charity, there should be no thought of the object given; but the Lord should be thought of. How? God should be thought of as the giver, the given, the receiver, and even the act of giving. Everything is God, and everything belongs to God. The one who gives and what is given are as much creations of God as the one who receives. All are limbs of the one universal being of God. A practice and as establishment in this is '*Brahma-Karma-Samadhi*', as explained in Verse 24, Chap. IV of the Gita. This is the fire of knowledge that burns to ashes the endless process of birth and death. Where is the possibility for an individualistic existence or *Jivatva* when everything is beheld as God or Brahman, as an undivided ocean of existence, of which the giver and the given are but waves which have no independent existence of their own apart from the ocean.

Karmas, says Arunagiri, are the cause of our present suffering as also for the never-ending chain of 'Samsara', of which our present life is but a link. He also prescribes the remedy for these, namely charity and meditation on the Lord,—charity to wash away Karmas, and meditation to cease from birth and death. "Charity covereth a multitude of sins," said Jesus Christ. We commit sins due to desires, greed, etc., which constrict the heart. Charity is an antidote to this malady. It expands the heart, fills it with compassion and love for the suffering. A man of charitable nature has a broad heart. He can *feel* for the sufferings of others. Charity thus renders the heart wet and soft, fit for the blossoming of the Lotus of the Lord's Feet in one's heart, for which the prayer was offered in the earlier verse. Thus charity purifies and prepares the heart, and thinking of the Lord while giving anything in

charity enables the planting of His Lotus Feet in that cultivated heart. Charity and meditation thus lead to liberation.

Charity is a broad term. It is not merely sharing or giving a little of one's wealth. One can be (and has to be) charitable in one's thoughts and feelings, in one's notions and attitudes. One can give one's wealth, knowledge, talents or wisdom in charity. Wisdom-charity or *Jnana-Dana* is considered as the highest form of charity, because while the effect of other forms of charity does not last long, *Jnana-Dana* leads to permanent good. All charity involves, however, sacrifice of one's pleasure—it may be physical, psychological or egoistic. Unless this element of sacrifice is involved in it, charity loses all meaning. The different kinds of charity or sacrifice are meant to serve as a means to and a preparation for the final sacrifice of meditation on the Lord, wherein one's individuality is offered in Universality. Thus one has to give away everything one has in charity—one's wealth, one's capacities and talents, one's ego, and finally oneself to God,—so much so, that nothing is left behind to be called as one's own or oneself. It is a giving without a remainder. No possession is left, and individuality, too, remains not. That is why Arunagiri did not content himself with saying 'give in charity' but has pointedly added 'unconcealingly'. Nothing is to be concealed or left over. Thus when all one's possessions are given away in charity and, with the master-stroke of meditation on God, one's very individuality is offered in the Universal existence of God, the bonds of Karma break and the process of Samsara comes to an end. Arunagiri therefore advocates charity and meditation as means to shatter Karmas and transcend transmigratory life. Charity is (material) external sacrifice and meditation is (spiritual) internal sacrifice, the former leading to and preparing for the latter. This is a practical instruction to attain that 'all-ceasing and mine-losing Good', referred to in verse 2. There it is a prayer offered to God, and here it is an instruction given to the mind; there the Goal, here the means. How beautifully are truths driven home by the saint!

[In addition to invoking the Lord's grace, as stated in the previous verse, the aspirant now advises his mind to give in charity and to meditate on the Lord's Feet—charity for the hard heart to become soft, and meditation for the blossoming of the Feet-lotus in the heart thus rendered soft—the combined action of which will attract Divine Grace.]

VERSE—8

**Amarum Padhikel Agamaam Enumip
Pimarangkeda Meipporul Pesiyavaa
Kumaran Giriraasa Kumaari Magan
Samaramporu Dhaanava Naasagane**

*The dwelling body and relatives, to regard as I (and mine)
This delusion to dispel, You spoke on Reality Supreme.
O Kumara, Himavan's daughter Parvati's Son!
O destroyer of Asuras who rose to fight and win!*

“O Lord Kumara! O son of Himavan's (King of Himalayas) daughter! O destroyer of Asuras who fought against Thee! It is indeed a wonder, O Lord, that You gave me *Upadesa* on the Supreme Reality such that the ignorance which makes one feel that the body in which the Atman dwells and the relatives as 'I' (and 'mine', respectively) has been destroyed.”

EXPLANATION

Kumara means one who is of eternal youth, Who is ever the same, Who knows no change,—the Absolute.

Kumara, again, means one who destroys evil. Ignorance is the highest evil, or the original sin, and is the cause of *Jivatva*. It is due to ignorance that one regards oneself as the body; one's wife, one's children and one's home as real, as one's beloveds, and as belonging to oneself. The Lord destroys this illusion by putting an end to the root-cause, viz. ignorance, by His *Upadesa* about one's real nature or identity.

Uma Devi, the divine consort of Lord Siva, as the daughter of Daksha, was known as Dakshayini. After the dishonour meted out to her by Daksha (her father) at the

well-known Daksha-Yajna, wherein Daksha's ego was quelled by Lord Siva, she was ashamed of being called Dakshayini and requested Siva for a change of her name. The Lord granted her wish and ordained her to be born as the daughter of the Himalayas (the King of Mountains) who was then doing penance for getting a child. Accordingly, Dakshayini was lying as a child in the Himalayas where the King found her and fondly fostered the child. She was now known as Parvati—the daughter of Parvataraja, or the Mountain-king, the Himalayas. From her childhood she was devoted to Lord Siva and she used to accompany her father and assist him in his worship of the Lord. In course of time, as she grew of marriageable age, her mind too got fixed in the Lord. One day, when she was offering worship to Siva, the Devas, who were oppressed by the demon Surapadma and others, requested the Lord to marry Parvati Devi and give them a powerful leader who alone, they were convinced, could kill the Asuras. The Lord consented to their prayer and accepted Parvati. Then, from the *Tejas* that emanated from the third eye of Siva, when the Avatara of Lord Skanda took place in the *Saravanna-ppoigai*, as explained in the Invocatory Song, Parvati became *Prasnat-stani*, i.e., a mother with milk-flowing breast; and when she with Lord Siva came and took the babies, they assumed a single body with six faces and twelve hands. Thus is Skanda the Son of Parvati, daughter of Himavan.

Later on the Lord fought with the Asuras and destroyed Surapadma and his retinue. He also annihilates the demons of ignorance, lust, greed, etc., in the inner battle of the seeker. Hence He is spoken of as the destroyer of the Asuras.

Arunagiri's addressing the Lord, in the second half of the verse, in three different aspects, has a great spiritual significance: The Lord is (1) *Kumara* (the Eternal-aspect, as He ever is); (2) *the Son of Parvati* (the Avatara-aspect, that is, materialisation of Pure Spirit in the relative plane

for the 'good' of the world); and (3) *the destroyer of Asuras* (the Guru-aspect, Who by His Upadesa destroys the Asuras of ignorance, etc.). He thus brings out the great truth that the *Eternal Reality* manifests itself as an *Avatara* and also comes as one's personal *Guru*; yet, it is the self-same Reality.

The Lord who is thus the Absolute and the Guru gave Upadesa to Arunagiri, which destroyed his delusion. Due to ignorance, the body is mistaken as the Self or 'I', and vice versa; and, as a consequence, the people related to it as 'mine'. But the body is *Jada* or inert, because it can neither know itself nor other things. It appears to be conscious on account of the Atman (Consciousness) which temporarily animates it. Hence the body is not the Self, but only an abode of It. The mind and the intellect, too, are ultimately not sentient, because they are products of *Prakriti*, which is itself bereft of consciousness. The Self is the only conscious principle to which all these are in the position of an object. It is the real 'I'. But due to ignorance, the nature of which is indescribable, the Self has come to regard itself as the body, etc. This is called *Bhrama* in Sanskrit, which in the verse has been turned into '*Pimara*' to be in conformity with poetic grammar. The Guru's Upadesa dispels this ignorance. The Guru by spiritual initiation brings about a peculiar transformation in one's consciousness by which it suddenly realises its essential nature and gets freed from the clutches of *Prakriti*'s modifications with which it erroneously identified itself all this time.

Arunagiri does not reveal directly what Upadesa was given to him by the Lord. Probably it is not meant to be revealed. But the effect it produced is stated,—the destruction of the false identification with the body and its relations, *Ahamkara* and *Mamakara*. By this Upadesa on the nature of the Self or Atman, Arunagiri at once realised that he is the *Satchidananda* and with this realisation his delusion vanished. Over this special favour conferred on him, the saint exclaims in joy and says, "A great wonder

it is indeed, O Lord! that Your Upadesa on the Supreme Reality instantaneously dispelled my ignorance."

The first line of the verse is usually interpreted as: ".....the delusion on account of which one erroneously thinks that this is my dear native place, (these are my) beloved relatives and (this is my) dear house has been destroyed."

* * *

When the mind gets purified to some extent by charity and contemplation, the Lord appears as one's Guru. The Guru is God manifesting himself in a human form. Guru and incarnations of God should not therefore be regarded as mere human personalities, which error an aspirant generally commits. Bhagavan Sri Krishna says, "Fools disregard Me, clad in human form, not knowing My higher Being as the Great Lord of beings" (Gita II-11). The neophyte on the spiritual path cannot comprehend the highest reality, all of a sudden. The mind, in the initial stages, needs a more concrete form to perceive, adore, serve, move with and meditate upon. Hence God comes as the Guru; and the Guru should be regarded as such. The Supreme Reality takes an Avatara and again comes in a human form as one's Guru to give Upadesa on the Absolute, because only the Absolute can instruct on the Absolute. He, however, comes to the level in which we are, in a human form, to take us to His level.

[The joint effort of charity and divine contemplation (verse 7) draws divine grace which comes, in human form, as the Guru, who gives instruction to the student on (the nature of) Reality. By this advice of the Guru the seeker gets to know that he is not the body, but that something which indwells it. This instruction does not cause an actual destruction of his ignorance but only gives him an intellectual understanding that he is the Self and not the body, etc. This is the first advice given by the Guru and it is an external one, i.e., it is a verbal instruction.

That the grace of God has come in the form of the Guru and given him the instruction is, however, not as yet known to the aspirant; it is revealed to him only later on, in verse 13.

The appearance of God's grace, as the Guru, may also be in the form of works written by realised souls, which the seeker might come across, from a study of which he comes to know that he is the Self, in reality, and not the body. Verily, great souls 'speak' through their writings. "If you are influenced by the teachings of a saint," says Swami Sivananda, "he is your Guru."

In the case of Arunagiri, it is true that the Lord's Upadesa destroyed his ignorance at once and he had Self-Realisation. But the rare blessedness of the saint cannot be had by another, especially by an ordinary Sadhaka who receives Upadesa from a Guru.

In the case of Sadhakas, the Guru's Upadesa temporarily lifts his mind to such heights that he might feel he is freed from Maya. It is because of the mighty spiritual presence of the Guru and the power that is transmitted by him to the disciple, even if the Guru be God Himself. But the disciple soon reverts to his old condition, of course, with a knowledge of the existence and nature of higher realities, for attaining which Sadhana has to be done. This is quite evident from the case of Arjuna, who, in the battle-field of Kurukshetra, was given the highest gospel, which contains all the Wisdom in the universe, by no less a person than Yogeshvara Krishna Himself. It seemed to Arjuna that all was clear to him then, and he also declared that his ignorance was gone. But what was his condition after the Mahabharata war? He was once again the same old Arjuna! It is so because the universal vision and the Wisdom were not obtained as a result of Sadhana, but was temporarily 'given' by the Lord, as an encouragement, by His divine power.

It would, therefore, be clear that even after the Upadesa of the Guru, Maya may not totally leave its hold, though

the Sadhaka has now a clear understanding of it. Thus, in the case of the aspirant, it would mean that the Guru gives Upadesa on the nature of Reality, which is capable of bringing about the destruction of his delusion, in course of time, because of the intellectual knowledge it has given him that he is the Self and not the body, etc.,—a knowledge which he did not possess before and which henceforth forms the basis of his Sadhana.

The Guru's first Upadesa is like a stone dropped in a tank whose waters are completely covered by moss. The force of the throw of the stone separates the moss for a while and the water is temporarily made visible for a moment, but is at once covered by the moss again. This however has given a knowledge of the fact of there being water beneath the moss, which was not even known before. So is the case with the Guru's powerful instruction on Reality which makes the aspirant feel, at least for the time being, that he is the Self.

At the first contact, the Guru gives Hitopadesa, i.e., speaks some words of wisdom, which gives immense solace to the aspirant. The Guru only 'speaks' about the nature of Reality. He does not, at once, give actual 'initiation', which is Upadesa in the true sense of the term, which he does after due preparation (verse 20). Very appropriately the saint uses the word 'speak' (Meipporul 'Pesudhal') in this verse and in verse 11, and the word 'initiate' (Upadesam 'Unarthudhal') in verse 20.]

VERSE—9

Mattoorkuzhal Mangaiyar Maiyal Valaip
Pattoosal Padum Parisenrozhiven
Thattoodara Vel Sayilat Theriyum
Nittoora Niraagula Nirbbayane

*Caught up in the fragrant dressed women's infatuation-net
And tossing thereby—When shall I cease from this plight?
O Lord, Who lets go the Vel to pierce the mount;
Who is Fierce and Painless, Undaunted and Great!*

“O Lord, Who is Fierce, Painless and Fearless! Who so despatched the *Vel* as to pierce through the centre of the Krauncha mountain (without any obstacles)! When shall I cease from the miserable plight of tossing (of mind), being caught up in the net of infatuation for fragrant-dressed women?”

EXPLANATION

Lord Shanmukha, with a throw of His *Vel*, destroyed the Krauncha mountain, i.e., the demon who was cursed by sage Agastya to remain as a mountain till he came to be killed by Lord Skanda (verse 4).

The Lord is fierce. He is not only fierce to His enemies in battle, but He is also the scorcher of the inner enemies of His devotees, viz. lust, greed, anger, egoism, etc., which cannot be eradicated except by divine grace.

The Lord is painless. He is free from sorrow of any kind, due to absence of limitation of any kind. He is blissful, *Anandamaya*.

The Lord is fearless. To give battle to the terrible Surapadma and other Asuras was a mere play for Him.

Arunagiri invokes the special grace of the Lord saying, "O fierce One, save me," because this delusion as the wiles of sex is difficult to get over by ordinary human effort. No advice, no admonition will work here. It appears that the Lord has to use fierce means to rescue one from this terrible malady. Arunagiri had suffered much from this craze in his earlier days. He fell into the hands of women of ill-fame. His love for sex was so inordinate that he lost all his wealth in it and became penniless. Yet the desire did not leave him. One version of his life-history gives the following account.*

Arunagiri was born in a Vesya (prostitute) family and had a sister who would do anything for him and his ways, to be true to the words given by her to her mother at the time of the latter's death. He led a life of abandon in his youth so that even his flesh soon became diseased with infections. He had lost his wealth and even squandered all that his sister had earned, and made her too, penniless. In this condition, one day he demanded money from her, for his sense-gratification. She had nothing to give; but he would not listen. Her advice fell on Arunagiri's deaf ears. She grew desperate and said: "Brother, your love for the pleasures of women is so keen and intense that you must have them still. Now you have exhausted all my means and I have not a penny with me. So I find no other alternative than to offer myself for your pleasure. Here I am, with me you can find the pleasure you seek." Lo! A miracle happened. These words of his sister poured through Arunagiri's ears like molten lead and he was shaken to the bones, and so fundamentally shaken that in a moment of repentance he decided to end his life. He climbed the temple-tower and threw himself down from there. But God appeared there, saved him and blessed him. Thence onward Arunagiri became a saint.

Thus saint Arunagiri knew pretty well what it was

*Vide 'Lord Shanmukha and His Worship' by H.H. Sri Swami Sivananda.

to suffer from passion and he also learnt that nothing but God's grace can help one in overcoming desire. Arunagiri, in this verse, addresses the Lord as 'fierce', because His grace often comes through hard situations in life. Those piercing words of his sister—that not only shook him, made him repent and resolve never to seek pleasure any more, but also, as a measure of *Prayaschitta* or expiation of sins, made him attempt to end his life by falling down from the tower—were the inscrutable, fierce ways of working of the Lord. The medicine should be as strong as, if not more than, the malady itself. Hence the Lord adopts violent and fierce means to recover one from acute situations.

The condition of tossing of mind is an experience known to every seeker. He has an ideal to concentrate his mind upon, an *Ishta Devata* on whom he wants to meditate. But the objects of love do not allow this; they attract his attention and the mind is drawn out from the ideal by force, as it were. With great difficulty he tries to withdraw the mind from them and fix it on the Lord, only to find that in a moment's time it has again gone to the objects of pleasure. The swinging of the mind thus between its ideal (the Self or God) *within* and the objects of love *outside*, between the effort at its concentration and the pull of sense-objects is very trying. This painful plight of tossing of the mind cannot be overcome except by the Grace of God, for which is the prayer in the verse.

Infatuated love is compared to a net because those who get entangled in it cannot easily extricate themselves from it, even as those that got into the Krauncha mountain were trapped into it and could not get out of it. And again, even as the Lord's *Vel* alone could pierce through the mountain, only the Lord's Grace can free one from the net of *Moha*. Hence the implied prayer, "O Lord! You despatched the *Vel* on the mountain; why don't You shower Your Grace on me?"

The verse is not a condemnation of women, but points

out the power of inordinate love for sex that makes men suffer, and directs one to resort to God for freedom from it.

Arunagiri weeps before the Lord for His grace and mercy, to be freed from infatuation for women. Though he has already been freed, he does it for people's sake, placing himself in the plight in which they are, so that men have but to repeat the verse, and God's grace shall save them.

[Though the instruction of the Guru has given the aspirant an intellectual understanding that he is not the body, etc., he is not freed from sensory attractions, the most annoying of which is that for women. He tries to control his senses and meditate on the Self, but his mind is tossed about between his *ideal* and the *actual*, between the Self *within* and the objects *outside*, between his intellectual understanding and the practical temptations in day-to-day life.]

VERSE—10

Kaarmaamisai Kaalan Varir Kalabat
Thermaamisai Vandhedhirap Paduvaai
Thaarmaarba Valaari Thalaari Enum
Soormaa Madiyat Thodu Velavane

*If, mounted on black buffalo, Yama approaches me,
Appear on Thy beautiful-plumed Peacock and bless me;
O garland-chested! O thrower of Vel that cleaved finely
The Sura-tree—the Valan-killer Indra's enemy!*

“O Lord, Whose chest is ever adorned with victory-garlands! O despatcher of the Vel so as to cleave the mango-tree-Surapadma who was the enemy of the kingdom of Indra who killed the Asura called Vala! In case (by mistake) Yama comes on his black buffalo (to take away my life), give me Thy vision appearing before me on Thy beautiful-plumed Divine Vehicle, Peacock.”

EXPLANATION

Vala was an Asura. He propitiated Lord Siva and obtained a boon from Him by which his body, on his death, should become the nine precious gems.

He once defeated Indra in a battle. In appreciation of the Asura's valour, Indra asked him to choose for a boon from him. The Asura laughed and replied, “You have been defeated, and you ask me to choose a boon! I will give you a boon; choose.” Indra, seizing the opportunity wanted him to become his sacrificial cow, and when he did so Indra killed him. Thus when the Asura died, due to his boon from Siva, his body became the nine gems, as: blood—carbuncle; teeth—pearls; hairs—Lapis Lazuli; bones—Diamond; bile—Emerald; fat—Sardonyx; flesh—Coral; eyes—Sapphire; and phlegm—Topaz. For adopting unfair

means in killing Vala and for many other atrocities committed, Indra had to undergo untold torture at the hands of Surapadma who invaded his kingdom, Indraloka, and even burnt it. Surapadma is, therefore, referred to as the enemy of the kingdom of the Vala-killer, Indra.

Surapadma, with his entire army, gave a heroic battle to Lord Skanda. The Lord destroyed his army, his chariot and everything, and the Asura was left all alone. Yet the ego, a personification of which he was, did not leave him! The time for his doom had come. But the Asura had performed great Tapas and had obtained the blessing of Lord Siva who only had come in the form of Lord Skanda, though he was not aware of it. Pleased with his earlier austerities and with his heroic stand now, the Lord, out of compassion, showed him His *Visvarupa*. It was the blessed fortune of Surapadma to have a vision of the Cosmic Form, beholding which he humbly bowed down to the Lord recognising His Divinity. But lo! the power of ego is so great that when the Lord withdrew His Cosmic Form the Asura was again up with arms to fight, forgetting the vision. Now, having been left alone, Surapadma used all his Mayaic tricks in the fight. He assumed in quick succession various forms and fought with the Lord, Who destroyed them all. Finally he took the form of a mango tree. Standing in the mid-ocean as an unimaginably huge tree, with roots struck deep and branches shooting up to the heavens, he shook the earth and heavens, causing terror even to the Devas. It seemed as if the earth and heaven would crumble to dust. Now, Lord Skanda despatched His *Vel* which cleaved the tree into two halves and threw the Asura into the ocean.

To the Lord who destroyed Surapadma with His *Vel* and whose chest is ever adorned with victory-garlands, saint Arunagiri offers the prayer, "O Lord, if Yama comes to take away my life, appear before me and save me."

This verse is an effective prayer to ward off the fear of death. Yama approaches only the world-conscious people, but not the devotees of God, much less a saint of the order

of Arunagiri. Yet he offers this prayer to infuse confidence in the heart of devotees that the Lord will appear before them to protect them in case Yama comes by chance. Because, if by any mistake Yama happens to approach a devotee, Yama's form with his black buffalo may cause terror in him; but the Lord's *Darshan* at that time with His enchanting form of garland-adorned chest, on the beautiful peacock, will soothe the devotee's heart and comfort his soul. Hence the prayer. What a beautiful contrast between the black, buffalo-riding, terrible Yama, and the beautiful, peacock-riding, enchanting Skanda!

Arunagiri had no doubt that Yama could not approach him as he had been specially blessed by Lord Shanmukha. And, truly Yama did not approach him; for when his mission was over, Arunagiri attained blissful communion with Lord Skanda.

[Fear of death may take possession of the Sadhaka. This may be on account of his body getting emaciated due to the inner psychological tussle (verse 9) and the consequent mental unhappiness, or due to his *Tapascharya*, or due to advancing age. The seeker, therefore, offers a prayer to the Lord for protection, i.e., to appear before him in case Yama comes to take his life, because he does not wish to die before attaining God-Experience.]

Fear of death is also a great factor in Sadhana, which goads the seeker to resort to the Lord with greater surrender.]

VERSE—11

**Kuugaa Enaen Kilaikoodi Azhap
Poogaavagai Meipporul Pesiyavaa
Naagaasala Velava Naalukavith
Thyaagaa Suraloga Sigamaniye**

*My relatives to gather round and lament as 'kuu-kaa',
Not so to die, Lo! On Truth Supreme You gave Upadesa;
O Poet-maker, of the type four! O Velayudha!
O Lord at Nagasala! O Crest-Jewel of Devaloka!*

“O Lord enshrined (on the hillock) at Nagasala! O Velayudha! O Granter of the power to compose the four kinds of poetry! O Crest-Jewel of Devaloka! What a wonder; You gave me *Upadesa* on the Supreme Reality such that it averted my so passing away as to occasion my relatives to gather around and lament as ‘*Kuu-Kaa*’ over my dead body!”

EXPLANATION

Nagasala is another name for Thiruchchenkodu. Thiruchchenkodu is near Salem, in South India, and has a beautiful hillock on the top of which Lord Skanda is enshrined. This is one of the important places visited by the saint, which captivated his heart. The enchanting form of the Lord and the charm of the temple and of that place attracted the saint so much that in one of the verses of his other work *Kandar Alankaaram* he says, “O, what a pity that Brahma has not created me with four thousand eyes to behold the Lord at Thiruchchenkodu.” Arunagiri has dedicated many *Tiruppugazh* songs in praise of the Lord at this place, and had obtained a special boon from Him that, wherever he be, when he utters “Kanda” and calls the Lord, He would appear. Such is the glory of the Lord of Thiruchchenkodu.

When Arunagiri threw himself down from the Temple tower to commit suicide for the expiation of his wrongs, had

the Lord not held him with His hands, given Upadesa on the highest Truth (which we shall see in verse 12) and commanded him to sing His glories, Arunagiri would have died like any other mortal, which would have occasioned the gathering of the public and his relatives around his dead body, wailing over it. Not only did the Lord save him from this phenomenon, but also conferred on him the ability to compose songs in His praise, and finally to rest in His *Sat Chit Ananda Swaroopa*. Hence Arunagiri says that the Lord, who grants the power to compose the four kinds of poem (all of which Arunagiri has done in his different works), revealed to him the Supreme Secret and also averted the usual phenomenon that takes place at one's death. Over this extraordinary favour conferred on him by the Lord, Arunagiri exclaims in joy!

Aasu Kavi, *Madhura Kavi*, *Chitthira Kavi* and *Visthaara Kavi* are the four kinds of poetry, in the Tamil language. *Aasu Kavi* is to compose poems at once on a given theme or subject. To sing verses overflowing with sweetness of music is *Madhura Kavi*. To compose poems which can be expressed through drawings is *Chitthira Kavi*. *Visthaara Kavi* is the elaborate long works of poetry (Epic poems). Lord Murugan is considered as the Tamil God, the Lord who gave the Tamil language. So He has the power to confer on one the capacity to sing poems of all kinds.

[Here is the further instruction of the Guru to the seeker. Though the Guru's *Hitopadesa* (verse 8) gave him immediate solace, the aspirant is troubled by attractions of sense-objects and by fear of death (verses 9 and 10). Seeing this disturbed mental condition of the disciple, the Guru again gives Upadesa to him on the Supreme Reality (i.e., the Self) by which he is convinced that he will be taken beyond death and that it will avert the usual scene on death. It is not that he has crossed over death, but the Guru's instruction is so powerful and convincing that he foresees that he will not pass away like an ordinary mortal.]

VERSE—12

Semmaan Magalaith Thirudum Thirudan

Pemmaan Murugan Piravaan Iravaan

Summaa Iru Sollara Enralume

Ammaa Porul Onrum Arindhilane

*The Stealer who kidnapped Valli, the red-deer-born;
That Glorious Murugan, deathless and unborn—
When He, speechless, instructed me 'Be Silent',
What wonder! Even a single object I knew not.*

"What a wonder! When Lord Murugan—the Stealer who kidnapped Valli born of (Lakshmi in the form of) a red deer, the Glorious One, the birthless and deathless One—instructed me through silence (speechless Upadesa) to 'be silent', Lo! I knew no object of the world."

EXPLANATION

The Lord is the Glorious One. His glory is beyond human understanding. He is Immortal, birthless and deathless. He is not born nor does He die like us, forced by Karmas. But the Lord appears in a human form out of His free-will for the sake of His devotees, which is called an Avatara, or the descent of God for the salvation of man. God manifesting Himself in the relative realm is Avatara. It is, in the higher sense, the descent of God-consciousness for the ascent to it of the Jiva-consciousness.

In verse 6, we have already seen the birth of Valli, through the deer. Valli developed intense love for the Lord from her birth, and it grew with her age. Knowing this, one day Lord Murugan went in disguise to the corn-field where Valli was, and tested her devotion to Him in many ways. Being pleased with the steadfastness of her true devotion to Him, the Lord revealed His identity and assured

her that He would soon come to her home and accept her in marriage. Accordingly, Valli was eagerly awaiting the Lord's coming, day and night. In the dead of a night, the Lord went to her home and, finding everyone else fast asleep, took her away without the knowledge of anyone, and made her His divine consort. Hence, He is referred to as the 'Stealer of Valli'.

Indeed the Lord is the greatest and real stealer, as He snatches away the hearts of people. The stealing of Valli at midnight has a spiritual significance, too. Valli is the Jivatman, the soul aspiring for communion with the Lord. When the Jiva is determined to attain the Lord and engages itself in earnest Sadhana, the Lord tests the Jiva in a variety of ways and finally gives assurance, by way of inner spiritual experience and conviction, of accepting the soul, as He did in the case of Valli. The soul now awaits the blessed moment and is ever vigilant; and the Lord appears when it is the dead of night, when all are asleep and everything is silent. When it is all night to the senses, the mind and intellect, i.e., when they cease functioning on account of their powers having been consumed in the fire of the Jiva's aspiration for God, God snatches away the soul,—the higher spiritual Consciousness takes possession of the Jiva. Herein is revealed the secret that the awakening of the higher spiritual Consciousness (which is the appearance of the Lord) is possible only when the outgoing tendencies of the senses, the externalising nature of the mind and the objectifying character of the consciousness are withdrawn and centred in the heart, which is the abode of the Self.

In the previous verse Arunagiri said that the Lord gave him Upadesa on the Supreme Reality, but did not reveal as to what that Upadesa was. In this verse he does it; 'Be silent', was the Upadesa.

Silence or *Mowna* is of three kinds—physical, verbal and mental. To remain steady or unmoved in body, in one pose, is physical silence or *Kashtha-mowna*. To observe silence of speech is verbal or *Vang-Mowna*. There is then the silence of

the mind, due to eradication of Vasanas or desires, which is *Mano-mowna*. In *Kshtha-mowna*, mental silence may not be there; similarly, in *Vang-mowna*, the body and mind may be active. But in *Mano-mowna*, physical and verbal silence take place automatically. Mental silence is, therefore, the most difficult of achievement and is superior to the other two. All these three kinds of *Mowna* are practised and attained with effort.

But there is another kind of *Mowna*, the spiritual *Mowna*, which is altogether of a different nature, which includes and transcends the three types, which can be had only by God's Grace. Spiritual *Mowna* is the silence of the soul, or the resting of the Jiva in God-Awareness wherein the mind automatically rests in Silence, the mouth speaks not and the body does not move. When God chooses to give this spiritual *Mowna*, or the speechless Upadesa, which is the manifestation of God-Consciousness, the Jiva becomes 'silent' and it sees nothing of this world as it loses itself in God and becomes one with everything. This is indeed a rare experience, given only to the chosen few.

The Upadesa "be silent" is the last instruction in the spiritual path. And it is needless to say that it is to be given through silence. What is this speechless Upadesa? Or, how to instruct without speaking? Yes, language or speech is the means of instruction, but each aspect of the human being has a language of its own, peculiar to itself. There are different kinds of language which the different aspects of the personality understand. We do not speak to animals and tell them not to do a thing; they will not understand our language. So we resort to the 'language of the stick' to instruct them. We have then the case of obstinate children who would not listen to their parents. But a good thrashing is the method of instruction to them which they understand at once. This may be called the 'physical language'. The ordinary 'verbal language' is generally understood by

all. Emotions such as love, compassion and even anger are expressed through the 'language of the eyes'. The lover and the beloved speak between themselves in this language. We have then the 'language of the heart'; a devotee speaks to God, and vice versa, in this language, through feelings. Finally there is the 'language of the Spirit' in which God speaks to a ripe soul. That is the 'language of Silence', which a Jnani understands. Divine Wisdom is conveyed through silence. Here, each successive language is superior to the former. Hence the saying, "The language of silence is more powerful than the language of speech." One can understand or instruct in a corresponding language according to the level in which one is. Thus, the Lord who is the Absolute can speak through Silence, through His Omniscience, which is speechless Upadesa.

When the four Kumaras approached Lord Siva (Dakshinamurti) for instructions, the Lord explained the lower stages of Yoga and when the final stage of *Samadhi* was to be taught, He remained in Silence (*Samadhi*) and made them too to enter into *Samadhi*. He revealed that state to them, not through any instruction but by *Being*. *Samadhi* is supreme Silence, and He gave the instruction on *Samadhi* (i.e., to be silent) by Himself being silent. This is the mystery of revelation, of Avatara, of God-Experience. Hence the Bhagavad Gita says, "He that sees, hears and speaks of the Self is a wonderful man. Such a man is very rare. He is one among many thousands. Thus the Self is very hard to understand" (II-29). Hence the saint also exclaims and says, "What a wonder, I got the rare blessedness!"

The Guru, or God, does not stand outside and instruct the disciple. Physically He may appear to be so, but He manifests Himself as the latter's very Consciousness and thus instructs silently. God-Consciousness supervenes in Jiva-consciousness, the instructor and the instructed become one. Thus the supervening of God-Consciousness is itself the speechless *Upadesa* as well as the instruction to be silent.

So Arunagiri says that this instruction to 'be silent' was given not by word of mouth. It is not an instruction through activity or external demonstration, not a verbal instruction, not even a thought-transference. It is a mysterious 'happening',—a process of the Spirit, by the Spirit, through the Spirit. The Lord or higher Self reveals Himself as one's own Self. It is a spiritual Awareness granted sheerly by the Lord's grace and not attained by mere human effort. To this the Upanishad refers as, "He reveals Himself to him whom He chooses." Lo! In this highest spiritual Awareness, the world ceases to exist,—the world as perceived now, as an entity outside and independent of the knower, as cut off from the Universal Existence of God. The Jiva is not, and the world too ceases to be; God alone Exists.

It is very interesting and important to note that the moment the Lord gave *Upadesa* to be silent, Arunagiri knew nothing of the world. It was not that he had to put the instruction into practice and then have the experience. No; it was not so. The Lord instructed, and he experienced; that is all. This is quite evident from the verse, wherein the saint says, "When He instructed me, 'Be Silent', Lo! I knew nothing." The word '*Enralume*' is very significant and it leaves no room or scope to say that the experience came *after* some practice, but positively indicates that it was had *at once*. After the Lord's instruction, he was not required to sit motionless, observe verbal Mowna, silence the mind, or do any such thing, to enter into that state. There was no process involved; it was a simultaneous happening. The Lord's *Upadesa* and the saint's experience were not consecutive, but instantaneous. The two were one. We have also seen how the speechless *Upadesa* of the Lord and the *Upadesa* to be silent were also simultaneous. Thus the three—the silent *Upadesa*, the instruction to be silent, and the experience of silence or not knowing anything of the world—were not different, but was an at-one-stroke-happening.

Thus, God revealing Himself in one's heart as Supreme

Silence or the Self is 'speechless Upadesa' (*Sollara Upadesam*); the simultaneous absorption of the Jiva-consciousness is to 'be silent' (*Summa Iruththal*); and the consequent non-awareness of the world is 'to know nothing' (*Porul Onrum Aridhal Illaamai*)—which all occur simultaneously—which is, in essence, the spiritual significance of the Lord's stealing Valli. Therefore Arunagiri says, "The Lord who stole Valli away from her people and made her be with Him as His consort, stole me also away from this world-awareness and made me 'be silent' in His Awareness."

Why is "Be Silent" a great Upadesa? God is Omnipresent, He is all-pervading. The question then arises, why do we not feel or experience God? But the answer is simple—we are not 'silent', we make the mistake of 'searching' Him. He is everywhere; where then is the need to search for Him? But that is the mistake we do! It is a mistake because to search is to localise or externalise God; and God, being all-pervading or universal cannot be so localised. The Universal cannot admit of externality, of space and time. Hence the need to cease from this search. This 'ceasing' is to 'be silent'. The consciousness of ceasing from all activity through the mind and senses and to rest or be in itself is 'to be silent'. Then, naturally, nothing of the world will be known.

[As mere Upadesa does not help the disciple much (verse 8 to 10), this time the Guru, in addition to the Upadesa (verse 11), gives him a state of temporary spiritual Awareness by his spiritual power. At once, all objectivity vanishes, he sees nothing of the world and has a glimpse of that baffling experience of non-dual Awareness.

This temporary state also gives the aspirant an insight into the nature of God and Guru, which he reveals on return to normal consciousness (in the next verse).

The spiritual state is given by the Guru not by verbal instruction but by silence—may be by a touch or a look, or even a gesture.

Though in the case of Arunagiri it means actual realisation of the Absolute, in the case of the Sadhaka it is only a temporary state 'given by the Guru, only to convince him of the existence of higher spiritual experiences and of his supernatural powers, so as to infuse confidence into the disturbed seeker's mind of the competency of the Guru to lead him to God-Experience. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, by a touch, made Vivekananda fly into an ecstasy of spiritual Awareness, in which state he saw nothing but consciousness everywhere. But it is not attainment of the Goal; the seeker returns to his normal condition and has to put forth effort to realise that Experience for himself.]

VERSE—13

Murugan Thanivel Muninam Guruvenru
Arulkondu Ariyaar Ariyum Tharamoo
Uruvanru Aruvanru Ulathanru Iathanru
Irulanru Oliyanru Enanindra Adhuve

*(That is) Murugan, the Peerless Vel Lord and our Preceptor—
Is this possible of being known, Unless known through Grace?
Not with form, not without; not existence, not otherwise,
Not darkness, not light;—Thus the Absolute is.*

“That (Supreme Being or the Absolute) which can be said to be neither with form nor without form, neither existence nor non-existence, neither darkness nor light, is (Itself) Murugan, is (Itself) the Lord with the peerless *Vel*, is (Itself) our Parama Guru,—Is this capable of being known except by those who know it through (Divine) Grace? (i.e. Except those who realise this by Divine Grace, no one can know this secret).

EXPLANATION

In the previous verse we have seen that when the Lord revealed Himself as Supreme Silence, Arunagiri became silent and knew nothing of this world. But, then, what did he know in that condition? Something unknown to the mortal vision was revealed to him! That experience he pours out as this verse, on return from that experience, which, of course, in the translation, loses its original charm. In that condition he intuitively felt: (1) the nature of the Absolute, (2) that the Absolute is Murugan, is the Peerless-Vel Lord, is our Guru, and (3) that Divine Grace is the only means of knowing this.

Nature of Reality

(i) What is the nature of the Absolute? The Absolute is indescribable. But the human mind, which wants to know even things transcendent through its limited understanding, will not accept this easily. It will try its best to define and understand the Absolute also. Hence the saint gives a series of negative definitions so that in its effort to know it, the intellect may get baffled and cease from its effort, which is a condition necessary for Reality to reveal Itself. It is to make the intellect 'understand' that Reality is beyond understanding. When the intellect knows its limitations and, ceasing from its efforts, 'be (comes) silent', Reality is 'known'.

The Absolute is not with form, is not formless, not existence, not non-existence, not darkness, not light. Such is Reality, says Arunagiri.

Form and formless: Reality is that which is Eternal and knows no change or destruction. Hence It cannot be with form, because anything that has form is subject to change and destruction. Form belongs to the nature of objects and not of Reality. Can we, then, say that Reality is without form? No; because whatever is seen here, is nothing but a manifestation of That alone; for there is nothing second to It. The whole Cosmos, says the Veda, is but a fraction of His being. So whatever is seen with form cannot be excluded from Reality. Hence It can neither be said to be with form nor without form, because form and formlessness are concepts of the human mind; they do not obtain in the realm of Reality. It is that which is, said a great saint,—It is that which is without form, and also that which is with form. Therefore, when we say It is, we have said everything about It. It is with form, It is without form, and It is beyond form and formlessness. Reality is.

Existence and Non-Existence: Reality is said to be neither existence nor non-existence. It is not existence like the existence of objects. Objects exist now in one condition and now in another. They change themselves from one

condition to another, because they are subject to the laws and limitations of space, time and causation. But Reality is not so; It is not existence like the existence of an object conditioned by space and time, as these do not obtain in Reality, they being posterior to It. It is not non-existence also because It is the substratum for all that exists. Supposing It is non-existence, who knows It? There must be someone to know even this non-existence; that someone is Reality. It is not existence or non-existence as conceived by the human mind; It is Existence as such, which lends existence to both existence and non-existence. Even non-existence exists, or is; and that is Reality. What was there before creation? No one knows because we, who try to know That, are all the effects of creation, i.e., we came after creation began; and so who is to know what was there before creation? Something *was*, which can neither be said to be existence nor non-existence. Hence when Reality is said to be neither existence nor non-existence, it is to be understood as that which is existence and non-existence, and also that which is beyond both existence and non-existence.

Darkness and Light: Reality has been defined as neither darkness nor light, It is not darkness because by Its Light all else shine. But it is not light in the ordinary sense of the term, because It cannot be perceived by the senses. It is the light by which the senses are empowered to behold, the mind to think, and the intellect to understand. Who is to see that Light when It is the Seer? Thus Reality is both darkness (to the senses) and (the source of all) light, and beyond both darkness and light.

The negative affirmations are only to show that Reality is beyond all definitions, though it excludes nothing. It is at once immanent and transcendent—immanent because It, being universal, is in everything; and transcendent because nothing can limit or exhaust It. Such is the nature of Reality.

That Reality Itself is Lord Murugan. That Itself is the Lord with the peerless *Vel*. That Itself is one's Supreme

Guru. Can one understand this Supreme truth except by His Grace? No, is the experience of the saint.

It is not that Reality is one thing, Murugan is another, the Vel is yet another and one's Guru the fourth. The One Reality appears as all this, at different stages of evolution of the soul.

(ii) Reality does not belong either to the waking or dreaming or deep sleep states, but stands transcending them.

All that we sense or perceive in the waking state is either with form or without form. The endless objects that we see have forms; the colour, the taste, the sound and the touch have no forms. Thus the entire waking state is characterised by either form or formlessness. But, says Arunagiri, Reality is neither with form nor without form, which means to say that It is beyond the waking state or the phenomenal world, that It is not limited to the latter though the same is not excluded from It.

The dream experience is characterised by existence as well as non-existence. The dream world exists so long as one is in dream; to the dreamer it is real and so it cannot be said to be non-existence. But it is soon transcended on one's waking up and so it becomes non-existent. But Reality is neither existence nor non-existence, which means to say that it is beyond the dream state, and is not limited to it, though the same is not outside Reality.

The deep sleep state is characterised by both darkness and light. In deep sleep there is no sense-operation and no dream experience. It is all darkness and there is no perception, mentation, etc. It is as if everything is dead; darkness everywhere. Yet, there is a light or awareness that 'knows' that nothing is known. When one wakes up from deep sleep, one says, "I had a sound sleep. I *knew* nothing." There was someone (the awareness) that *knew* nothing. Hence Reality is neither darkness nor light, that is to say, It is beyond the deep sleep state also, and is not limited by it, though the same is not excluded from it.

Thus, 'neither with form nor without form' negates the waking state, 'neither existence nor non-existence' negates the dream state, and 'neither darkness nor light' negates the deep sleep state; and 'that which stands thus' refers to the Atman or Self which cannot be exhausted by any of the three states, which stands transcending the three states, which is the Witness of and Substratum for the three states. That Atman is Murugan, is the Lord with the peerless *Vel*, is one's Guru—is known by one who knows by His Grace. The Guru-Gita beautifully puts this thus: "Prostration to Dakshinamurti Who appears in the threefold form of God, Guru and the Self (Atman), Who pervades everything with his form like the sky."

(iii) The Absolute is defined as neither with form nor without form, etc., because it is the Absolute, not the particular. To the Jiva which is separated, as it were, from God, the concepts of form and formless, etc., hold good, because there is something outside it, other than it, which can be either with form or without form, either existence or non-existence, either darkness or light. Where there is duality there is scope for such dualistic concepts. But when the Jiva is absorbed into the Absolute, as it happened to Arunagiri when the Lord made him "be silent", the Absolute *Alone* is, without a second to it. Duality does not obtain there. In that condition of *Absoluteness*, naturally the relative or dualistic concepts of form and formlessness, etc., 'do not arise. Such is the nature of the Absolute which Arunagiri experienced due to the supreme Grace of the Lord when He, speechless, instructed him to be silent.

In short, Reality cannot be described as this or that. Whatever definition be given of It, it will fall short of It. If It is defined as 'this', it will exclude the 'not this' aspect of it. Similarly, if It is regarded as 'that', it will not include the 'not-that' aspect. Hence a negative definition has been given, only to serve as a clue to arrive at It. To say that It is neither with form nor without form is only to show

that It is both the formed and the formless, and is beyond both form and formlessness which are but phases of Reality. Even so, to say Reality is neither existence nor non-existence means It is both existence and non-existence, and is beyond both, which are only aspects of It. Similarly, It is both darkness and light, and that which is beyond both and serves as the substratum for both, which are only phases of It. The universal includes all in itself and stands transcending them, that is, not limited by them. The Universal is the Universal; Reality is Reality; and no definition of It can be given in the human language. But It is realisable in Inner Experience, as Murugan, (or as any God), as the Lord with the *Vel*, and as one's own Guru, when He chooses to reveal Himself out of pure Grace.

When one tries to *understand* Reality, it is neither existence nor non-existence, etc.; but when one *experiences* Reality, it is Murugan, an embodiment of Wisdom (*Vel*) and one's Guru. When the intellect, baffled, fails to understand Reality and ceases, Reality reveals Itself as Murugan and says, "I am That I am", or as the Lord of Wisdom and says, "I am That I am", or as one's Guru and says, "I am That I am".

The Absolute which is neither with form nor without form, etc., is also the Lord Murugan, is the Peerless *Vel*, is the Guru. That means the latter three are also neither with form, etc. The real nature of the Lord, the *Vel* and the Guru is formless; is Pure Consciousness. But, for the devout meditation and devotion of the seeking soul, they appear with form. They have therefore, two aspects,—the physical and the purely spiritual.

God, *Vel* and Guru have forms, from the standpoint of our physical perception. But when the mind is rendered pure by devotion and Divine Grace, their spiritual nature is revealed, when form gives place to formlessness. Similarly, they have existence in the sense of limited form in which they appear. But this gives place to unlimitedness or non-existence when their higher nature is revealed. Again,

they are darkness, i.e., their true nature remains unknown until revealed, when it gives place to light, when the limited existence of form shines as the Infinite, unconditioned Consciousness-Light.

The human mind, in the initial stages, due to impurities, is unable to perceive Reality as such. It requires a prop, a support, a form to concentrate itself upon. So God who is beyond all forms appears as a personal God, with various Divine Weapons, and also appears in a human form as one's Guru. By serving one's Guru and following his instructions, by being devoted to God, the disciple's mind is gradually purified and becomes fit to understand the higher nature in him. Finally, as a master-stroke, he reveals his highest (Divine) nature by that unique Upadesa of "*Summaa Iru*", "be silent", himself being in Silence. When this experience is given, the world vanishes from his perception, both form and formless vanish together, both existence and non-existence disappear together, and both darkness and light cease. What remains then? "*Summaa Iruththal*", or *Mere Being*—God's Pure Existence, the Jiva and the world duly transformed and absorbed into Himself. It is *Kevala Asti*, Mere Existence, or "*Verum Thaan*" in the words of verse 28.

Such an Absolute, says Arunagiri, is Murugan, is the Peerless *Vel*, is our Guru; and this is possible of being known only through Grace. He does not, however, say by whose Grace is this known. Evidently, it is not necessary. Because, the three being One only, by the grace of anyone of the three this is known. And even this truth is disclosed by that Grace alone! What a wonder, indeed. This is the mysterious Grace-Circle—Grace being revealed through Grace, being known through Grace and being known as Grace, where everything is Grace and nothing but Grace. There is no place for the intellect or understanding. That Grace is the Absolute; That is Murugan; That is the Peerless *Vel* Lord; That is the Guru, and That is Arunagiri, too, who has packed so much wisdom, and even more, in a single verse.

The Verse is also interpreted as:

(1) "That Supreme Reality which can be said to be neither with form nor formless, neither existence nor non-existence, neither darkness nor light,—Is That capable of being known except by those who, thinking and meditating as 'Murugan, the Lord with the Peerless *Vel*, is our Guru', obtain His Grace and know It in experience?"

(2) "Except for one who, obtaining Murugan's grace, knows that Murugan who has the peerless *Vel* is one's Guru, is it possible to know that Reality which can be said to be neither with form nor formless, neither existence nor non-existence, neither darkness nor light?"

[In that temporary state of Divine Awareness 'given' by the Guru (verse 12), the great revelation dawns on the aspirant that the experience of the Absolute is indescribable, that It itself is the Lord Who has come as one's Guru, and that Divine Grace is the only means of knowing these truths.

It is interesting to compare the sequence and the import of the epithets "Murugan—Thani Vel Muni—Nam Guru", of his verse, with "Kumaran—Giriraasa Kumaari Magan—Samaramporu Dhaanava Nasagan", of verse 8. A close study of this would suggest that what is revealed now is implied in verse 8. The fact that the Lord appeared as the Guru is not openly said in verse 8; it is only implied and has to be extracted by us—this impliedness is to suggest that it is not given to the seeker to know the fact at that stage. But in this verse it is said in clear and explicit terms—this is to suggest that that which was a secret so far is now revealed to him.

Consequent on this great revelation, the seeker does not any more make a distinction between Guru and God. He feels a total identity between them. He sees the Guru not as a human, not even merely as one spiritually evolved, but verily as God Himself, as one's Self, as the Absolute.

The experience naturally infuses in the seeker an unshakable conviction and confidence that his Guru will doubtless take him to the Grand Goal of God-Experience.]

VERSE—14

**Kaivaai KadhiraVel Murugan Kazhalpetru
Uivaai Manane Ozhivaai Ozhivaai
Meivaai Vizhinaasi Yodum Seviyaam
Aivaai Vazhi Sellum Avaavinaaiye**

*Murugan with Vel radiant in hand—His Feet obtain
And be saved, O mind! Give up, give up soon
The desires that course through the senses four and one:
The body, mouth, eyes, nose and ear, in addition.*

“O mind! Give up, give up the desires that project themselves through the five sense-organs of body (skin), mouth, eyes, nose and ears (for the enjoyment of objects of the world); Obtain the Lotus-Feet of Lord Murugan with the radiant *Vel* in His hand, and be saved (that is, attain salvation).”

EXPLANATION

Desires, says Arunagiri, stand in the way of our attaining *Anubhuti* or spiritual experience. They dissipate one's personality in various directions and destroy one's peace and happiness. Desire is the greatest obstacle in the path to liberation. Hence the exhortation to the mind to give up desires. The necessity for it is so much that Arunagiri repeats it twice, saying, “Give up, O mind! Give up desires that project themselves through the senses.” The reason why desires are obstacles and are to be given up is given so impliedly in the verse that it is likely to go unnoticed. Desires activate and agitate the senses, project themselves through the senses, and thus externalise the consciousness. This is the bane of spiritual seeking. The tendency of the desires to externalise the inner personality (the Consciousness) to have contact with the world outside and thus not

allow it to rest in itself is the cause of our unhappiness. The resting of Consciousness, they say, in itself is true happiness, a glimpse of which is experienced, though negatively, by everyone, daily, in deep sleep. In deep sleep, there are no objects, no contact with them, no sensory or mental function and yet one is so happy. One longs for it for the happiness it gives. One may have physical ailments or mental worries, but they vanish in sleep. Sleep gives the needed happiness and comfort, which cannot be had from any other source. Wherefrom does it come? Internal to the body, internal to the senses, internal to the mind, is the Self or Consciousness (Atman or God) which is an embodiment of Happiness. When the mind projects itself through the senses, it goes away from this source and thus is deprived of happiness. When it returns to its source, it enjoys the bliss of the Self. In sleep, there is a thin veil of ignorance preventing the merger of the mind in the Self and so one experiences the bliss negatively and returns to misery again. But in spiritual communion or Realisation the veil is rent asunder once and for ever, and true Happiness or Bliss is experienced, which is the aim of all Sadhana and for which this verse directs the mind.

Why should desires be given up to seek spiritual experience? Why not have the bliss of the Self and the gratification of the senses also? Well, there is no harm! But, is it possible, is the question. No. The two cannot go together for obvious reasons. They are diametrically opposite and cannot co-exist, just as darkness and light, or day and night cannot go together.

If we cannot have both, then can we not have fulfilment of desires and be satisfied? No; it cannot be, because desires cannot be fulfilled. This is the uniform declaration of the scriptures as also the experience of all persons. Sense enjoyment aggravates desire for further enjoyment, like ghee poured over fire which flames up and wants more. There is no one whose desires are fulfilled by enjoyment and could say that he has no more desires. Further fulfilment of desires is attended with various defects and also

sin. Thus the desires can neither be fulfilled nor is this fulfilment desirable. Nor can the desires be suppressed for a long time. It would be like keeping a powerful spring under check, which would only come back to its original position the moment the pressure is relaxed a bit and we know that the pressure cannot always be kept exerted, due to our own weaknesses. A force cannot be checked without being utilised elsewhere. If the waters of a river are harnessed by a big dam, they have to be diverted in some other direction and properly utilised, otherwise the dam will soon be washed away by the force of the water. Hence, a force or a power cannot be merely restrained without being utilised in some way. Thus desires can neither be fulfilled finally nor suppressed nor checked for ever. They have only to be given up or sublimated.

But, in spite of knowing all this, desires are not easy to be got rid of. Desires do not seem to leave us like that, for our mere saying, 'get away'. They clamour for satisfaction. Why? A little probing into the very texture of desires is necessary to understand this. We have to go a little deeper and find out the reason for the existence of desires, as to what a desire is, or why there is desire at all? A deeper analysis will disclose that desires are not of the body, or senses or even the mind, which are only channels of expression of a force which is called desire. This force is, ultimately, of the Atman that indwells the body. The Jivatman which has separated itself, as it were, from God longs for reunion with its Source. Though this restless aspiration of the Jiva to unite itself with God is genuine and praiseworthy, when it gets misdirected with an outward tendency to contact objects outside through the mind and senses it comes to be called desire. What it requires, therefore, is only a redirection, a turning within. Just as a person who has moved away from the centre and wishes to get back to it has only to trace his steps back, and not stray away further, the soul-force (called desire when expressed through the senses) has to turn back from its wanderings in the sense-world and withdraw itself into the

source, the Atman, which process is called sublimation of desire. It should not stray out further through the externalising activity through the senses. Hence the instruction to the mind to abstain from projecting the desires through the senses.

The desires that project themselves through all the five avenues (of senses) are to be given up, is the instruction of the saint. Arunagiri's instruction is complete. It is not mere control of one sense only. Control of this or that sense alone will not do, because when one sense is controlled, energy will leak out through another, since desire, as seen earlier, is a force that tries to express itself wherever possible—through this sense, if not possible through a second, a third and so on. Hence an all-round conservation of energy is advocated. If any one sense is left uncontrolled, it will take a heavy toll and play havoc anytime. Only when the energy is totally preserved, can it be utilised for the higher purpose of meditation on the Lord.

Arunagiri does not stop with saying, "O mind, give up desires", but also shows it the method of saving itself, by obtaining the Feet of the Lord. This again is a complete instruction. The mind that wants to give up desires must have something else to hold on. If the mind leaves one object, it will think of another, because it is its natural tendency or Dharma. To think is the function of the mind. So if the mind is made to give up desires for one set of objects, it will have attachment to another set, since it cannot but think, which is equally bad. Hence if the mind has to give up all desires for all objects, it has to think of something else whose character is dissimilar to that of objects. It is therefore advised to think of God. Now, how is the thought of God different from that of an object? God is not an object. While objects are particularised existence, God is universal existence. To think of God is therefore to think of the universal, which at once puts an end to all thought of particulars, because to the universal there is nothing external; the universal includes and

transcends all particulars. God-thought is therefore an antidote to thought of objects; the former is called *Bhagavat-chintana* and the latter *Vishaya-chintana*; the former leads to liberation, the latter to bondage and misery. Not only that the mind cannot but think, it cannot also think of more than one thing at a time. This is a great secret to be understood and properly utilised by seekers. Either it can think of God and thus be saved or it can think of objects and land itself in endless misery. The mind is therefore said to be the cause of one's liberation as well as bondage.

The mind is fickle by nature. It cannot steadily hold on to one thing for a long time; even for a minute it cannot wholly fix itself on one thing only. So unsteady is the mind, and to steady it the only way is to make it think of the Lord. To wean the mind from dwelling upon objects, it has to be given a more attractive, more pleasing and more absorbing thing, the best being God Himself. Hence the saint advises the mind to take refuge in the lotus-feet of Lord Murugan Who has the shining *Vel* in His hand. The *Vel* is referred to as shining *Vel*. It is considered as pure Consciousness and in the higher stages of meditation on Skanda, men of experience say, only the *Vel* remains, which represents Wisdom or Pure Intelligence. Intelligence is to be differentiated from the intellect which is a finite instrument, a medium of expression of the Intelligence. The *Vel* is Intelligence itself and is referred to as *Sakti-Vel* and *Jnana-Vel*. The *Vel* is often identified with Murugan. Hence thinking of or meditation on Murugan is tantamount to meditation on the *Vel*, or Pure Intelligence, or the innermost Self within, all which are of the nature of pure Consciousness. The sense-energies that are withdrawn by giving up of desires give the needed power for the mind to concentrate itself on the Self within (Lord Murugan). And this is the way to salvation Arunagiri advises the mind.

[On return to his original state from that temporary spiritual Awareness that was 'given' to him by the Guru,

the Sadhaka now aspires to 'attain' that experience through Sadhana. Hence the instruction to the mind to give up all desires and resort to the Lord.

Here, the desires are not for this or that object, not for particular things, but desire as such; i.e., the mind longs to somehow project itself through any of the senses and contact objects. Therefore is the instruction to restrain all the five senses and give up all desires, because they will try to externalise themselves through that sense which may be weak. The mind is then to be fixed on the Lord or the Self within. When the Lord's Feet manifest themselves or are granted, Maya takes to its heels.]

VERSE—15

**Murugan Kumaran Guhanenru Mozhindhu
Urugum Seyalthandhu Unarvenru Arulvaai
Poru Pungavarum Puviyum Paravum
Gurupungava Enguna Panjarane**

*‘Murugan, Kumaran, Guhan’—Thus to utter and melt
And have Divine Experience, When shalt Thou grant?
O Guru Supreme! Who is worshipped by the Devas devout
And the mortals alike! O Abode of Virtues Eight!*

“O Guru Supreme, who is worshipped by the battling Devas and by (men of) the world, who is an Abode of eightfold attributes! Granting me the state of melting (of heart) with the utterance of ‘Murugan, Kumaran, Guhan’, when shalt Thou bless me with Inner Awareness (Divine Experience) ?”

EXPLANATION

Lord Murugan is worshipped both by the gods in heaven and the mortals on earth, alike. The Devas were driven out of the heavens and put to untold humiliation by the Asura Surapadma and his brothers, with the power of the extraordinary boons obtained by them from Lord Siva. Lord Skanda killed the Asuras in battle and saved the Devas from the atrocities of these Asuras and restored them back to their rightful heaven. Hence the Devas always offer devout worship to the Lord.

People on earth approach the Lord for various purposes—for fulfilment of their desires, for warding off their calamities, for attainment of God-realisation, etc.,—for everything they are in need of, all which the Lord grants.

Hence the mortals on this earth sing the Lord's praise and resort to Him for all their needs.

Lord Skanda imparted the secret Upadesa on Pranava or Omkara to Lord Siva. He also gave Jnana-Upadesa to saint Agastya and the six sons of Parasara Muni. Hence Arunagiri addresses the Lord as Supreme Guru or Master.

The eightfold attributes of God, according to the Tamil scriptures are: (1) Self-Dependence, (2) Immaculate Body, (3) Natural Understanding, (4) Omniscience, (5) Natural Freedom from attachments, (6) Unlimited Grace, (7) Omnipotence, (8) Limitless Bliss. These attributes are reducible to Sat-Chit-Ananda, which is Brahman.

Withdrawing the mind from its externalisation, i.e., from desire-prompted sense-activity, the Lord's Lotus-feet are to be sought, was the instruction of the preceding verse. Now, in this verse, one of the methods of achieving this is given by Arunagiri. Mere human effort to fix the mind on the Lord is not enough. God's grace must come to our help, and it is to be invoked through prayer and repetition of the Lord's Name.

The Lord's Name is filled with infinite powers. It is all-purifying. The Name is considered to be even more powerful than the Lord Himself; because while the Lord saved a few only, His Name gave liberation to many. Name is a vibration, a powerful vibration, which consumes all other less powerful vibrations (thoughts) of objects. Repetition of the Lord's Name creates such a harmonious vibration in the mind and the system that it is easily attuned to the Lord, who may be said to be a Cosmic Vibration. The mind becomes subtler and subtler by prolonged repetition so that a time comes when the mind melts itself in God, and God alone remains. So Arunagiri prays to the Lord to grant him the blessedness of repeating His Names as 'Murugan, Kumaran, Guhan', and so repeating to melt the heart and experience God within.

In the beginning of Sadhana, Japa or repetition of the

sacred Name may be merely a loud chant or utterance; it may not be accompanied with the requisite feeling in the heart. The lips may be repeating the Mantra, but the heart may yet be dry and the mind thinking of something else. But, by and by the repetition should bring about the desired result. Verbal repetition should not merely end with it, but should slowly lead to the feeling of the heart, is hinted at by the saint.

The Japa to be accompanied with heart's feeling is not an easy achievement, because the heart is full of impurities and it takes quite sometime for the heart to be purified and to melt. But the Name of the Lord is powerful enough to effect this, provided that it is done with faith and for a long time. Will this alone do? No. Sadhana does not end with purification of heart. When the Lord's Name is repeated, the heart should melt and it should further lead to inner communion with the Lord. It should end in spiritual Awareness, an Awareness of one's true Being, or God. God-consciousness or Divine Experience is the Goal of all spiritual Sadhana.

When we utter the Lord's Name, the mind should melt and the heart should feel God. It is the at-one-ment of the speech, mind and heart—the total personality of ours—with God that can bring God-Experience. Else, this delusion of world-experience will not leave us and we will be in that condition which was touchingly portrayed by the saint in verse 5. But one should not lose faith. Constant utterance of the Lord's Name will bring about the melting of heart and Divine feeling in course of time, by continued practice with love and devotion to His Feet.

In the first verse Arunagiri offered a prayer to the Lord that he be blessed with the only work of singing the glories of the Lord. But he did not mention the purpose of it, which he discloses here. It is not meant to make a show to the world that one is a great Bhakta or devotee, but to have inner communion with Him. How? The utterance of the Lord's Name leads to melting of the heart (which is

hardened due to countless desires) and finally to the Awareness of God. Utterance of the Name, melting of the heart and God-Experience—this is the process of Bhakti Yoga; and this can be compared to the three steps of the Vedantic Sadhana of *Vasanakshaya*, *Manonasa* and *Tattva Jnana*.

Vasana is a subtle desire, and the mind is nothing but a bundle of desires. There is nothing to be called the mind when there are no Vasanas, even as there is no cloth without the threads constituting it. Now, when we think of an object, a desire for it arises in the mind which is a disturbance in the mind. Just as the thought of an object is capable of creating a disturbance in the mind, which is desire; even so a thought of God is capable of setting a harmony or balance in the mind, which is destruction of desire. This destruction of desire or the process of pulling out the threads of Vasanas from the mind is called *Vasanakshaya*, which is brought about by the utterance of the Divine Name in the path of Bhakti. Such is the difference between God-thought and object-thought, between thought of the particular and the universal.

Just as there is no cloth when the threads that constitute it are pulled out one by one, there is no mind when the Vasanas that go to make it are thus destroyed gradually. *Vasanakshaya* therefore leads to *Manonasa* or destruction of mind, which is the melting of mind consequent upon the utterance of the Lord's Name. When the mind is thus destroyed, the Atman which is Self-luminous shines in its pristine splendour, even as the sun shines when the clouds that hide it disperse. The sun is always there and it ever shines; we do not create the sun or bring light into it; only the clouds, which are a collection of particles of water, that screen it are scattered. Similarly, when the mind, a bundle of desires is destroyed, the Atman is revealed and experienced, which is *Tattva Jnana*.

Thus *Vasanakshaya* leads to *Manonasa* and *Manonasa* to *Tattva Jnana*—repetition of the Lord's Name to melting of mind and the latter to Experience of God. Such great

Vedantic truths have been compressed in this verse in simple terms. *Tattva Jnana* may be said to be termed, by Arunagiri, as "*Unarvu*", in Tamil,—Awareness, Experience or Feeling.

Japa Sadhana is, therefore, considered as a complete Sadhana in itself, that is, it is capable of bringing about God-realisation. Japa leads to meditation and meditation to Realisation.

[Instruction has been given to the mind to give up desires and to resort to the Lord (Verse 14). How to bring about this, is mentioned now—to utter the Lord's Name, to melt the heart and to feel God in one's heart is the method, for which Guru's grace is invoked. The seeker has already learnt that Divine grace has to back up human effort at every stage to attain anything worth the name. Hence the invocation.

Giving up desires and resorting to the Lord are not two independent Sadhanas to be practised separately, one after the other. The one implies the other. To the extent desires are given up, to that extent we are nearer to God. To remove the old, rusted nail in a plank and to replace it with a new one, there is the single process of placing the new one over the old and driving it, by which both are accomplished in one effort. Even so, a sincere repetition of the Lord's Name at once brings about the destruction of desires and also turns the mind within, gradually leading to melting of the heart and actual realisation of God within.]

VERSE—16

**Peeraasai Enum Piniyil Pinipattu
Oraa Vinaiyeen Uzhalath Thagumoo
Veeraa Mudhusoor PadaVel Eriyum
Sooraa Suralooga Thurandharane**

*Afflicted by the deadly disease of insatiable desire,
Is it fair that I, of evil deeds and non-discrimination, suffer?
O Valorous One! O Undaunted Vel-thrower
As to destroy the age-old Sura! O Devaloka-Protector!*

“O Lord Who is an embodiment of Courage! O Undaunted One Who threw the *Vel* as to destroy the age-old Surapadma! O You, Who took the responsibility of protecting Devaloka! Should I, of such evil Karmas as cannot discriminate, be tossed about, afflicted by the disease of inordinate desire! Is it fair, O Lord?”

EXPLANATION

Even the practice of the Divine Name, as prayed for in the previous verse, is difficult of achievement for people, because of desires. It is no wonder that people often think it a mere waste of time to sit and utter the Lord's Name. Their inordinate desire for wealth and enjoyment does not allow them to sit quietly even for a few minutes, think of the Lord and enjoy inner peace. What a power these desires have! They shake the very personality, agitate the mind and senses, and allow not man to be peaceful. Man is fooled by his desires that make him move outward, strive for wealth and pleasure which are not lasting and which bring pain in their train. People are helplessly tossed about by their desires. Poor man! he does not know that he is a puppet moved by desires. How aptly did Arjuna ask Lord

Krishna, "Impelled by what, O Lord, does man commit sin, though against his wishes, constrained, at it were, by force?" And the blessed Lord revealed the fact, the secret of secrets, that it is this desire and this anger that are the causes of all sinful deeds, that prompt men to sinful action, much against their wishes. Desire and anger (anger is only another form of desire) are the causes of human suffering. All sins can ultimately be traced to these two violent forces. This world-show is kept up by desires.

Desires are insatiable. The more we give them, the more they want. It is like pouring ghee over fire that will burn brighter consuming the ghee and wanting more. Every satisfaction adds strength to desire which craves for further satisfaction. And if anything stands in the way of its satisfaction, it causes anger; and we know the disastrous consequences of anger. Man loses his balance and becomes verily a beast. So much for desires.

Thus desires lead to undesirable results, whereas the practice of the Divine Name is sweet and soothing even while being uttered, brings solace to the heart and in the end bestows salvation to the soul. Yet, the inordinate desires goad man to strive for the perishable things of the world and make him suffer throughout. He revolves, caught up in this wheel of desires,—now for this and now for that. Man is nothing but a tool in the hands of desires.

Arunagiri traces the cause of this disease of desire to non-discrimination. In this he sums up the whole of human life, its suffering and its cause. Human life is characterised by suffering. There is no real happiness in this embodied life. Even the so-called pleasure is considered by a man of wisdom as only pain, for the pleasure, apart from being momentary and false, ends in pain, craving for further enjoyment, restlessness, anxiety and sin. What is the cause of this misery of ours? The body. The state of embodied existence is the cause of our sufferings. Now, embodiment is due to Karmas. Karmas bring us into existence in this mortal world. Why do we do Karmas?

Because of love or hatred—desire and aversion—we act; and attachment is the cause of love or hatred. Attachment to certain persons and things necessarily implies aversion to other things and persons, and this is due to non-discrimination. As everything is the creation of God, as everything is a limb of the Universal Being, as there is nothing outside God, as God has become all this, as God indwells all things, as everything shall pass away—there is no reason to love certain things and hate certain others; but to do so is non-discrimination or *Aviveka*, which is the cause of all our suffering and unhappiness. Though ignorance or *Ajnana* is the cause of *Aviveka*, for all practical purposes we may consider non-discrimination itself as the final cause for the disease of desire, embodiment and suffering.

Desire is the cause of repeated births and deaths, and truly Arunagiri refers to inordinate desire as a disease. In fact it is the real disease. Bodily ailments and diseases are not real diseases, because they trouble us for a short while and are cured afterwards. Even mental disorders can be cured or kept in check. Even if a disease is a chronic one, incurable, it will last only as long as the body lasts, and when the body dies, it dies with the body. It does not cause rebirth nor does it follow one in one's next birth. But these desires do not leave a man even in subsequent births. Unfulfilled desires trouble a man throughout the present life, cause rebirth and continue to trouble him in many future births. As we have earlier seen, since desires can never be fulfilled, they cause endless births, until they are sublimated or evaporated by spiritual *Sadhana*, coupled with Divine grace. This sublimation is possible only through a discriminative understanding of the nature of desire, its cause and methods of sublimation (for details, refer to verse 14). Arunagiri weeps, on our behalf, that he is bereft of this discrimination on account of which he is tossed about and afflicted by the disease of inordinate desires and he appeals to the Lord for His grace and mercy. To which Lord does he appeal? To the Lord Who killed Surapadma—an embodiment of inordinate desires, who, not

being satisfied with his rulership of the whole earth for ages, conquered even the heavens and subjugated the Devas.

Lord Siva incarnated Himself as Lord Skanda to help the Devas fight against the Asuras. Skanda was an embodiment of courage and an undaunted warrior even from his boyhood. He did many *Bala-lilas*, the childhood plays. He used to uproot the mountains, hide them in the ocean, and do all such feats. The Devas in heaven have heard of His glories, but have not seen Him as yet. On one occasion, they thought that some small boy is doing so much mischief and, not knowing that it was Skanda, they hurled on Him their weapons; and there ensued a big fight between all the Devas on one side and the Boy (Lord) on the other. All their weapons fell on Him as flowers and crashed to pieces. Finally the Boy sent His arrow and all Devas fell a victim to it. Apprised of the situation by sage Narada, Brihaspati, the Guru of Devas, came and pleaded with the Lord on their behalf, and the Lord was pleased to bring them back to life. The Devas fell prostrate before Lord Skanda and begged of Him His pardon. The Lord, wanting to reveal to them His Divinity, said, "You thought I am a small boy. Now you have realised who I am. I will further show you My power." So saying, the Lord showed them His *Visvarupa* or Cosmic Form. But they were unable to behold the full majesty of the Cosmic Form and, on their request, Skanda bestowed on them Divine Vision with which they beheld the full glory and majesty of the *Visvarupa*.

This incidence shows the valour and prowess of the Lord that even as a small boy He was courageous and brave to meet any situation. Hence, destroying Surapadma and his entire army was a mere play for the Lord. A throw of the *Vel* vanquished Surapadma, though the Lord allowed him to fight for six days. Thus the Lord is referred to as the Valorous one, as the vanquisher of the age-old Asura and the protector of Devaloka.

Desires can be destroyed only by the grace of God, even as the Asura, Surapadma, could be killed by the *Sakti*-

Vel of Lord Murugan. Arunagiri, therefore, invokes the Divine Grace of Skanda to destroy his desires and grant him, and us too, discriminative understanding and wisdom. He prays, "O Lord, You destroyed the age-old Asura with a throw of Your *Vel* and saved the Devas. There is a greater Asura in me, the insatiable desire. Is it fair that I should endlessly suffer at the hands of these desires, losing my discriminative power? Let Thy *Vel*, Thy Divine grace, kill this persisting disease of desires, and save me."

And again, "O Lord, You undertook to protect Deva-loka. Can You not protect me? Is it a big job for You? Have mercy on me and save me."

[Though the Sadhaka may cry out the Names of God, the melting of the heart does not come about easily, much less the feeling for God, because of the desires that lurk within the heart, that keep the heart stony. The gross desires that project themselves through the avenues of the five senses (verse 14) may be checked, but the subtle desires continue to tease the Sadhaka. He realises that lack of discrimination is the cause of this, and he prays to the Lord to grant him the needed discrimination.]

VERSE—17

Yaamoodhiya Kalvium Emmarivum
Thaameepera Veelavar Thandhadhanaal
Poomeel Mayalpooi Arameippunarveer
Naameel Nadaveer Nadaveer Iniyee

*The education we had and our inner Understanding too,
As Lord Velayudha, of His accord, bestowed on us,
Let go your world's delusion and hold fast to Truth,
Sing, with your tongues, sing His glories henceforth.*

“The learning we had and our Understanding were given to us directly by Lord Velayudha, of His own accord; therefore, casting aside (or overcoming) your delusion on the world, be rooted in the Reality, and with your tongues ever sing His glories henceforth.”

EXPLANATION

The books we have studied, the teacher under whose care we have been put, the understanding we have of what we studied—all these are directly given to us by the Lord Himself. There are hundreds and hundreds of books in the world, but the books that are to be studied by us (which will be conducive to the furtherance of our knowledge already He has given us in our previous births as well as in this birth so far) are placed, as it were, in our hands by the Lord. Every seeker or devotee does not study every book. Each one gets the book he is in need of, often in a mysterious way! The Lord arranges it, though He does not easily reveal this secret to us.

Again, each one goes to a different teacher, though they may study the same book. Our understanding of a text depends on the teaching imparted by the teacher.

And above all, a proper understanding of what we study is given to us (from within) by the Lord. Studying the same book, under the same teacher, each one's understanding differs. The reason is that one understands only as much as is revealed to one by the Lord. If we have a clear understanding of the higher truths, certainly it is due to His grace. If good books come to our hands, if we get guidance from sincere and loving Gurus (who have perfect understanding of the scriptures and direct spiritual realisation) and if we have Wisdom or a clear inner perception of Truth, no doubt it is due to His Grace. He alone makes us come across the books that we should study; it is He who brings us into contact with our Guru; and having read the books and followed the Guru's instructions, finally He it is that reveals Himself in us as Wisdom Supreme. It is the experience of seekers that truths often flash forth in their minds in meditation—truths which they have not heard from their teachers nor read from books, but truths of an altogether different source. Wherefrom do they come? God or Guru, from within reveals more secrets than what is heard or read from outside. Thus He comes to us at every stage of our Sadhana, right from the very beginning till we reach the pinnacle of Knowledge or Perfection.

He comes as the book, as one's Guru and as Wisdom. The book is a *jada* or insentient object with knowledge contained in it. It is knowledge in theory-form. Knowledge 'exists' in books; it is the *Sat* aspect. The Guru is a sentient or conscious being, an embodiment of knowledge, in whom wisdom is 'seen' in practical life; it is the *Chit* aspect. But in one's Inner Wisdom, one becomes Knowledge itself. Here Knowledge is inseparable from one's life. It is Wisdom, which is freedom and bliss; it is the *Ananda* aspect. These seem to be the progressive stages of attaining Knowledge—Knowledge in the book (potential), Knowledge in the Teacher (vibrant) and Knowledge in oneself (actual)—existence of Knowledge, consciousness of Knowledge and the bliss of Knowledge—Satchidananda.

This verse also conveys a great lesson to all. It seeks

to remove one's pride, whether of learning or of spiritual attainment. The learning we possess and the understanding we have are given by the Lord; they are not ours. Therefore there is no room for one to be proud of these. When they are not ours, when they are His, how can we be proud of them? So this verse is also a hint to be humble by remembering the fact that what we possess is only what is given to us by God.

And, what is that understanding that the Lord has bestowed on us? It is not bookish knowledge unconnected to life, but wisdom or Understanding which is life. It is practical knowledge intimately connected with life, so much so that is to be lived every moment of our life. What is that? We should let go this delusion on this world (of *Nama* and *Rupa*) and steadfastly hold on to Truth (which is *Satchidananda*).

What is this delusion on the world due to? The world is constituted of *Nama* and *Rupa*, or name and form. It is called *Nama-rupa Prapancha*, the world of names and forms, of objects. It is the seeing of names and forms, and not the essence behind them, that is the cause of our delusion. There is love and hatred for things because of the perception of different values in them on account of a difference in name and form. If the essence behind the names and forms were to be perceived, there would be no delusion—no love, no hatred, no preference, no like and no dislike. This can be made clear by an illustration. If a variety of dolls, all made of the same wood but of different shapes and painted with different colours—such as elephant, lion, horse, cat, tiger, dog, camel, etc.,—are placed before a child, it would like certain and want not certain others, for the simple reason that it takes the names and forms as real, not knowing that they are all made of the same wood. It would love the dog and the cat, keep them on its lap, kiss them and play with them. It would, on the other hand, be afraid of even touching the lion. It sees different values in the different toys. But for a matured

mind, for a grown up man, they will present no difference because he has the eyes to ignore the names and forms, though he too sees them, and see the substance behind them. He would neither love the dog nor be afraid of the lion. Hence the perception of *Nama* and *Rupa*, or name and form, is the cause of our delusion on this world of objects which are but the structural differences of the same substance, ultimately. Are not all gold ornaments nothing but mere gold? The different names we give them are due to the difference in their formation and not their substance. The different shapes and names of gold ornaments do not exclude the existence of the substance in them, nor are they obstacles to the recognition of the essence in them. Even so the names and forms of the objects of the world are not obstacles to the perception of Satchidananda, their essence, in them. They appear to be different and to possess different values on account of their variegated forms and not because of their essence. The Lord himself appears as these variegated objects.

That Satchidananda is the essence in everything should not be lost sight of in the perception of names and forms. So with the knowledge bestowed upon us by the Lord Himself, overcoming the delusion for names and forms, we should be rooted in the awareness of the presence of Satchidananda. Thus, says Arunagiri, hold fast to Truth casting aside the delusion.

Let us go into some more detail. Everything is said to be constituted of five characters—*Nama*, *Rupa*, *Asti*, *Bhati* and *Priya*. Of these, the first two belong to the external nature of objects and the latter three are the essence of which they are really constituted. Everything in the world has a name and form, e.g., river, mountain, sweetmeat, man, woman, etc. There is nothing but names and forms in the world; that is why it is called *Nama-rupa Prapancha*, the world of names and forms. But there is something more in them, in addition to name and form. There is existence, illumination and a capacity to give happiness.

No one wants to die; we want perpetual existence—this is the urge of *Asti, Sat* or existence. There is an urge for knowledge in everyone; no one wants even to be called a fool—this is *Bhatitva, Chit* or consciousness. We want happiness always and not pain—this urge is of *Priya, Ananda* or bliss. Thus there is a threefold blend of Existence-Consciousness-Bliss in us, in everything in creation. This seems to permeate Nama and Rupa. Indeed when we want objects, it is this Satchidananda that we seek in them and not the name and form as such. That is why when an object fails to give us the needed satisfaction we reject it; friends become enemies, loved objects are cast off mercilessly. We do not want names and forms but a satisfaction that comes from them, a satisfaction that they are capable (apparently) of giving us. But do we really get the satisfaction? No. Because this method of trying to satisfy our desires through contact with objects is erroneous, and we never get what we want. But yet we seem to get a satisfaction from them and that is why we run to them again and again. This is so because of an inner want in us. There is an inner, psychological tension in us, called desire, which is conveyed to the senses through the nerves. And when a release of this tension of the senses is brought about by a contact with objects, they seem to give us happiness or satisfaction. But the release of tension is not fulfilment of desire, because that which is an inner want and which caused the tension is still there deep in the personality, causing the tension over and over again. Thus desires are not to be finally fulfilled by contact with objects. Not only this, they excite further desire. We have already seen more details of this in verse 14. Things exciting desires and desires trying to get released or satisfied by contact with things—this vicious process goes on endlessly. This is the cycle of Samsara, the deadly disease referred to in verse 16, which is never cured. So, Nama-rupa Prapancha is not the way to Satchidananda; contact with objects cannot bring real happiness. What then is the way? Yoga, is the answer.

Even as Satchidananda permeates all things, it is in us too. Hence, to seek it within, rather than in objects, is the only way and the right method. We cannot come into contact with Satchidananda through objects because of the intervention of space and time. We may possess an object and hug it to our bosom, yet it will not become ours, it cannot enter into us and we cannot enter into it; we always stand separated from it. Hence to seek Satchidananda within is the only way. When the sense-powers that ramify in all directions to contact objects withdraw themselves into the mind, and the mind thus concentrated directs itself to its Source, the Atman, the Jiva dives deep within and directly comes into contact with Satchidananda. Like water poured into water or as a river entering the ocean, it becomes one with the Self, which is Satchidananda. This, in short, is the method of Yoga. Summing up all this Arunagiri says, casting aside the delusion on the world of names and forms through discriminative understanding, be rooted in the Self within.

And what is to be done further? "Henceforth, be singing His praises and glories, be repeating His Names, with your tongue," is Arunagiri's advice. Why? (So that once again we may not forget that Reality and be caught up in names and forms!) To show our gratitude to Him. By His grace we obtained the books we needed, a proper Guru and the Wisdom which has put an end to our delusion and has established us in that state of uninterrupted perception of Reality. Should we not be grateful to Him? And what can be a greater means of expression of our gratitude to Him than uttering His names, singing His Glories, always? To offer back to God what has been obtained from Him is to be grateful to Him. With the Understanding granted to us by God, we have to sing His glories. "What is the use of learning," says Tiruvalluvar, "if the learned worships not the holy Feet (of God)."

Also, singing His glories thenceforth may also be an expression of the Joy of the inner, perpetual awareness of

God. In verse 15, Arunagiri prayed for the blessing of uttering His Names, for melting the heart and for giving the Inner Awareness of God. Now he says, having been established in that Inner Awareness, let one henceforth sing His Names and glories. Thus Bhakti is shown to be the means for attaining Knowledge Supreme as well as the after-effect or expression of the latter. This is the glory of Bhakti or devotion; not so with Karma or the path of Action. The Lord says in the Bhagavad Gita that for a sage who wishes to attain to Yoga, action is said to be the means; but for the same sage who has attained to Yoga, inaction is said to be the means. Performance of action does not seem to bring joy after attaining Yoga, but singing the Names of the Lord brings Joy before as well as after attaining Yoga. Also it will serve as an inspiration and guide for others, because people generally follow a great person and do what he does. If he sings the glories of God, utters His Names, they too will devote themselves to these practices, which, in the latter's case, will serve as means to the attainment of Yoga.

The verse is also interpreted as: "Our learning and our understanding have been bestowed upon us by Lord Velayudha only to be received back by Him. Therefore, O people of the world, so long as you are on this earth, giving up your delusions, engage yourselves in acts of charity and righteousness (Dharma) and henceforth with your (God-given) tongues sing His glories."

[The seeker realised that lack of discrimination was the cause of desires, that is, the delusion in regard to the world; and in response to his prayer, the Lord or the Guru now grants him the needed *Viveka sakti* or discriminative understanding. With the dawn of *Viveka* in him he knows that he should give up his delusion and fix his mind on the Substratum, or the Self, and for which singing of His glories is the way. The great need for effecting a complete self-control (Pratyahara) before attempting at meditation (Dharana and Dhyana) is emphasised here.

The Lord appeared as his Guru and gave him *Hito-padesa* that he is not the body but the Self (Verse 7), which remained more as a theoretical understanding with him than an inner conviction. But now a true understanding of this advice is also given to him from within. Thus the instruction from outside and the conviction from within are both given by the Lord Himself, of His own accord.]

VERSE—18

Udhiyaa Mariyaa Unaraa Maravaa
Vidhimaal Ariyaa Vimalan Pudhalvaa
Adhigaa Anagaa Abhayaa Amaraa
Vadhi Kaavala Soora Bhayangaranee

*Unborn and deathless, unthinking and unforgetting,
Unknowable by Brahma and Vishnu,—such Ever-Pure's off-
spring!*

*O Great One! O Sinless! O Refuge! O Protector
Of Amaravati! O Surapadma's terrifier and terror!*

“O Lord Shanmukha! (Spiritual) Son of the Ever-Pure Lord (Siva) Who is birthless and deathless, Who thinks not nor forgets, Who cannot be known (even) by Brahma and Vishnu! O Great Lord, the sinless one, the giver of refuge, the protector of *Amaravati* (the capital of Svarga, or the abode of Devas), the terrifier of Surapadma!”

EXPLANATION

In the entire work of Kandar Anubhuti, this is a unique verse,—the only one purely devoted to singing the Lord's glories; unlike the others which contain either an appeal to the Lord, a supplication, an instruction to the mind, a revelation of His grace, an admonition, or description of stages of spiritual Sadhana, etc.

In the highest state of Jnana, one is contented with simple glorification of the Lord. One wants nothing in particular from the Lord, one does not pray for anything, nor feel the need to give instructions to others or to one's own mind which has since got perfect rest in its Source and feels not the need to move out, even to speak on matters spiritual. This is the highest stage of Devotion also, wherein the devotee does not feel the need to pray for anything from

the Lord. When the Lord Himself is attained, what more does the devotee want? His devotion to the Lord, in this stage, is so single-minded and his self-surrender so complete that the Lord looks after him, whatever be his needs, of which, often, the devotee is even unaware. This verse is the direct and immediate effect of the Wisdom conferred on saint Arunagiri by the Lord (as mentioned in the previous verse) that abandoning one's attachments to the world one should be rooted in the Real, and be ever immersed in singing the glories of the Lord. Probably this is also a verse to express his gratitude to the Lord for the Wisdom granted to him.

The sweetness of devotion is such that one feels full with it. Hence in the very first verse Arunagiri prayed for this only task of singing His glories, which, when accompanied with melting of heart and inner feeling, is the Goal itself.

God is birthless and deathless. He has neither a beginning nor an end. Everything has come from Him, is sustained in and by Him, and everything returns to or is absorbed into Him. But He, by Himself, knows no change. He does not think or forget, for there is nothing second to Him. Such is Lord Siva. The greatness of Siva is not known even to Brahma and Vishnu. We have already seen in our explanation of Verse 3 how Brahma and Vishnu failed to understand Lord Siva when He appeared before them as a Light while they were contending between themselves as to their supreme lordship. Lord Skanda is the spiritual son of such an ever-pure One—Lord Siva. In so saying, Arunagiri makes no distinction between Lord Siva and Lord Skanda, because the latter is only a manifestation (or another form) of the former for a specific purpose. Lord Siva had given boons to the Asuras, and so He would not kill them in that form of His. Nor anyone else could kill them. Hence Siva Himself appeared as Skanda to put an end to the Asuras. Thus Lord Siva and Lord Skanda are one.

The Lord is the Great One, He is the sinless One and

He destroys the sins of His devotees. He gives refuge to those who take shelter under His feet, who think of Him with an undivided mind. Lord Skanda is the protector of Amaravati. Amaravati is the capital of Svarga or heaven, wherefrom Indra rules. Surapadma invaded Svarga and drove away all the Devas from heaven. Only Lord Skanda could kill the Asuras and reinstate Indra on his throne, in Amaravati. Lord Skanda was a terror to Surapadma before whom no one else could stand. He had defeated all the gods and even extracted menial service from them. Siva appeared as Skanda and only He could destroy the Asura. At first Surapadma took Skanda for a small boy and sent his son Banukopan for battle. Even Banukopan was invincible to the Devas; they could not resist him. But to the Lord he was nothing. In no time He killed Banukopan, which news came as a shock to Surapadma. He then sent his brothers, Simhamukhan and Tarakasuran, who were killed by the Lord without much effort. This created terror in him. And finally he himself came to the battle-field. He hurled on the Lord the many invincible *Astras* or weapons given to him by Lord Siva. Some of these *Astras* the Lord destroyed with counter *Astras*, and some, duly meditating upon Lord Siva, He received quietly and kept by His side. The way in which the Lord handled and replied to his powerful *Astras* in such a simple and undisturbed manner struck terror into the heart of Surapadma. So Lord Skanda is referred to as the 'terror of Surapadma'.

The Lord is referred to as the protector of the Devas and the terror of Surapadma. He protected the Devas and destroyed the Asuras—this means He protects those who have *Daivi Sampatti* (divine qualities) and destroys those who are of Asuric nature (evil tendencies). The Lord is the protector of the good and the destroyer of the unrighteous.

In the previous verse Arunagiri said, 'henceforth let your tongue sing His glories'. How to do this is given in this verse. The glorification of the Lord should refer to His

highest attributes, a repetition of which would form a contemplation and meditation on Him.

When we sing the glories of the Lord, we partake of those qualities and attributes with which we glorify Him, because of the simple law that we become that which we think. Glorification of the Lord is a kind of meditation on Him, even as Svadhyaya is, since the mind for the time being is attuned to the Lord and abides in Him. When we sing His glories the mind dwells upon His virtues, and as the mind becomes that which it thinks, it is charged with those divine qualities upon which it contemplates. Singing is contemplation, leading to absorption. Thus when we sing 'The Great One', ideas of Omnipresence, Omnipotence, etc., flash in our minds at once, and a repetition of this leads to a total absorption of the mind in these ideas, which often leads the devotee to *Bhava Samadhi*, a temporary absorption in Divine consciousness.

Glorification of the Lord is a *total* supplication to Him, not for any specific purpose, or wanting something in particular. It is the longing of the soul for reunion with the Lord. When the soul wants nothing in particular, the Lord gives Himself *totally*. Glorification of the Lord is to want the Lord Himself and not something *from* Him. When He is attained, everything is attained, because there is nothing greater than He, nothing beyond Him and nothing outside Him. He is the Great, *Bhuma*. By undivided devotion to and glorification of the Lord, the soul *feels* its oneness with Him, *feels* the Lord as its own.

Arunagiri seems to refer to the Self and point out the method of meditation on it in this verse. The attributes mentioned of Lord Siva correspond to Brahman, the Absolute; and those of Skanda as Siva's son, etc. to the Self within on which is meditation to be practised. Thus, the first two lines of the verse describe the Atman and the last two lines show the line of meditation.

Very significantly the saint has used "*Vimalan*" to denote Lord Siva, which may as well mean Brahman. *Vimala*

is Nitya-Suddha, ever-pure, untainted by worldliness. It is Brahman, which is also birthless and deathless; is without thinking and forgetting; is not knowable even by Brahma and Vishnu, they being the effects of Brahman, and the effect cannot know the cause. Even as Skanda is the spiritual son of Siva, and yet none other than Siva; so is the Self, being located within, the 'son' of Brahman and is non-different from it. Thus reference to the Self as non-different from Brahman but as located within is for the purpose of meditation, is hinted at in the first half of the verse.

Now, how to meditate on the Self, is stated in the latter half. "The Great, the sinless, the fearless, the Lord of the heart, and the terror to the ego,"—thus is the Self to be meditated upon. There is nothing greater than the Atman. While the mind is greater than the senses, the intellect greater than the mind, and greater than the intellect is the Atman, there is nothing greater to it. The Self is the 'Sinless Ether' in the heart. It is fearless, and out of fear for it the other faculties in us work harmoniously. The Self is the Lord (caretaker) of the heart (Amaravati). The gods are the senses and just as gods dwell in heaven, whose capital is Amaravati, the senses reside in this body whose centre (or capital) is the heart. The mighty power of Skanda was a terror to Surapadma; even so an awareness of the universal existence of the Self is a death-blow to the individualistic assertion of the ego. Thus is shown the way of meditation on the Self as the great and sinless, as the fearless, as the support of the virtues and the destroyer of the vices in the Sadhaka, as the great Reality.

[With the coming in of true understanding given by the Lord,—that leaving the delusion regarding the world he should fix his mind on the Reality or the Self (verse 17),—the seeker now commences his meditation on the higher nature of the Lord, as the Self in him. Thus pure meditation is attempted at by the aspirant.]

VERSE—19

Vadivum Dhanamum Manamum Gunamum
Kudiyum Kulamum Kudi Poogiyavaa
Adiyandham Ilaa AyilVel Arasee
Midi Enroru Paavi Velippadine

*Beauty, wealth, (good) mind, noble qualities,
Good lineage and family prestige—all depart, Alas!
O King of sharp-Vel, the beginningless and endless One!
If poverty, the sinner, manifests itself in anyone.*

“O King (Lord) with the sharp *Vel*! O beginningless and endless One! If poverty, the sinner, afflicts a person, O what a wonder! his (bodily) beauty, his wealth, his (good) mental condition, his (noble) qualities, his (good) lineage and his family prestige—all leave him!”

EXPLANATION

The apparent meaning of this verse is clear. If poverty takes possession of a man, naturally he loses his bodily beauty for want of sufficient food and other day-to-day needs. The going away of his wealth is, of course, evident, because what is poverty otherwise? Due to misery arising out of poverty, one's mental state is always disturbed and he loses his peace of mind; his good qualities such as charitable nature, serviceability, etc., find no opportunity for expression. Under stress of poverty, one may even do acts unbecoming of his high lineage and against his family prestige. Therefore poverty is a sinner that nullifies all that is good in a person—physical, mental and spiritual.

But, the real poverty is moral and spiritual bankruptcy. Moral poverty eats away one's bodily beauty and wealth due to too much sense-indulgence. He is afflicted by terrible diseases which drain away his health and wealth. A morally

weak man cannot be strong in mind. His power of will is weak and his mind feeble; his good qualities take leave of him. His inordinate desire for sense gratification impels him to do acts unbecoming of his high birth and family prestige.

Spiritual poverty is still worse. It is *Avidya* or ignorance, and all that it implies. If a person has no good qualities such as devotion to God, love for fellow-beings, kindness, regard for the higher values of life, etc., he is worse than a pauper and a morally poor person. A person bereft of any spiritual wealth,—such as *Viveka* (discrimination between the real and unreal), *Vairagya* (distaste for unreal, perishable things of the world), faith in and yearning for God,—is a real pauper. He may appear to be healthy, beautiful, wealthy, and smiling outwardly, but in the eyes of God he is a fallen man. God's assessment of man is quite different from our way of assessing. He looks to our inner purity, inner *Bhava* or attitude, and not to external appearances and showy acts. In spite of all one's outward health, wealth, pleasing manners, high birth, etc., if one is wanting in spiritual wealth, he is to be considered as really a poor man, an ignorant person.

Material poverty is bad, but moral poverty is worse and spiritual poverty is indeed the worst. Material poverty can be removed by one's effort or by the offering of rich treasures by others. Comparatively it is easier to overcome material poverty. Moral poverty is difficult to overcome. Great effort is necessary. It is almost an herculean task for a moral weakling to become ethically strong. Yet one can achieve it by determined effort. But spiritual poverty is almost impossible to remove. We have all been suffering from this since ages. We are born and we die due to this. Ignorance or *Avidya* is the original sin that has taken possession of us, God knows since when! Forgetting our universal nature, limiting ourselves to a particular body, taking this fleeting world as real, loving or hating certain things, we act deludedly seeking the pleasures of the senses, and suffering endlessly. What can be worse than this? This is real

poverty—not to know who we are, what is good for us and how to seek it. This spiritual poverty can be removed only by the Lord Who is an embodiment of Knowledge, which is represented by the sharp *Vel*. As the *Vel* pierced through the Asura, the *Vel* of Wisdom has to destroy this Asura of ignorance in us. Only then there is salvation for us. Hence Arunagiri prays for freedom from poverty—poverty of every kind—to be free from penury so that one may do acts of charity and develop virtues, to be free from moral weaknesses so that one may devote oneself whole-heartedly to God, and to be free from spiritual poverty or ignorance so that one may rest for ever and ever in God. In removing the spiritual poverty other persons cannot be of any help, as with material poverty; even determined self-effort cannot help much, as with moral poverty; the only way is grace of Guru or God. Hence the prayer to the Lord, the King of the sharp-*Vel*.

Very significantly Arunagiri addresses the Lord in this verse as 'King with the sharp *Vel*'. Only a king can annul the material poverty of any person, because the whole wealth of the nation belongs to him, that is, his resources are inexhaustible. Even a rich man cannot do it, his resources being limited. The Lord is the Spiritual King—King of virtues, and He alone can give the needed moral strength to fight the inner weaknesses. He is also the Lord with the sharp *Vel*, which represents Wisdom Supreme, which can destroy one's ignorance. The Lord is an embodiment of all Divine Virtues (*Daivi Sampatti*) and He bestows on His devotees faith, *Viveka*, *Vairagya*, longing for liberation and finally, as the Lord of Wisdom, the Wealth of all wealth, *Brahma Jnana*.

In using the epithets 'sinner' (*Paavi*) and 'if manifest' (*Velippadin*) to 'poverty', Arunagiri seems to mean *Avidya* or ignorance (spiritual poverty) more than mere material poverty: (1) *Avidya*, as we know, is termed as 'the original sin', and it is personified as sinner. (2) The word '*Velippadin*' is to be carefully understood in its full connotation. It means

'if made manifest' or 'if manifests itself', which implies the existence of that thing already in an unmanifest or dormant form. It naturally refers to Avidya which lies deep in everyone as the root-cause of *Jivatva* or individuality; and we cannot say that poverty is unmanifest or latent in everyone, and that it manifests itself. Poverty is said to afflict people, which means it is an external condition imposing itself on a person. Similarly it can be removed by an external factor, viz., wealth can remove it.

Now, what is this manifestation of Avidya? We are, all of us, the products of Avidya. It is in everyone of us. But we seem to be all right so long as we do not touch it. We are too busy and engrossed with the world outside that we never go to that level of our being as to touch Avidya, which lies in the Anandamaya Kosha. But in the case of the seeker of a certain amount of advancement in his practice, who has turned away from the outer world and seeks to meditate on the Self within (as mentioned in the previous verse), ignorance which was there within, in tact and undisturbed uptil now, tries to hiss at him. It tries to manifest itself as various negative forces and impede his progress, squandering his spiritual wealth of discrimination, dispassion, etc.

Serious spiritual Sadhana is like touching a sleeping cobra, whose presence is not otherwise felt, when it hisses at us. One may then think: Why awaken it at all? Why not allow it sleep? Well! It may look all right, but it is necessary; because that it is sleeping is no freedom from its danger. So long as it is there, the danger is imminent, and it has to be faced sometime or the other. Until it is killed we cannot be free from the impending danger. So is the case with Avidya. So long as it is there, we are bound to this mortal existence. To attain *Anubhuti*, Avidya has to be removed by necessary Sadhana, sooner or later. One cannot help it.

In spite of the fact that the singing of the glories of the Lord is so consoling to the heart, destroys one's delu-

sion and fixes one's mind in Reality, yet it is a wonder that man finds it difficult to practise the Divine Name. Why? Arunagiri traces the cause of this threefold poverty. A pauper cannot easily give his mind to God because his attention is constantly drawn to the very maintenance of the body itself. A moral weakling also cannot devote his mind to God, since it is ever immersed in sense-pleasures. A spiritual bankrupt, though materially well-off and morally sound, does not have the needed *understanding* to seek God. He is still satisfied with the phenomenal world and knows not the higher Life. Though he is free from material wants and is peaceful in mind on account of his moral integrity, he cannot avoid the pains and miseries of Samsara or transmigratory life, such as ailments, bereavement, old age, death, etc.

The cause of man's suffering is poverty in the material world, moral weakness in the inner mental world, and spiritual ignorance in the realm of the soul. Removal of the spiritual poverty or ignorance alone can make man really happy. It is to rest in God's Omnipresence.

Arunagiri, in his earlier days, had suffered terribly from poverty, both of wealth and morality, (and of course everyone is afflicted with spiritual poverty). He was a moral wreck, ruined by sex-indulgence so much so that he lost all his wealth and became penniless and also affected by venereal diseases. He therefore knew the cruel nature of poverty and so he refers to it as a sinner. He had horribly suffered from poverty. It was his personal experience. Who helped him? The Lord with the sharp *Vel* appeared to him as a Guru and saved him not only from material want and moral weaknesses, but also from the spiritual poverty of ignorance of the Atman by bestowing on him Wisdom Supreme. He became a spiritual stalwart, who could administer to the spiritual aspirants the medicine for their disease, too. No more could sex have any appeal to him, nor was the bodily need left unattended to. Such is the grace of Lord Velayudha, the Lord with the sharp *Vel*, who saves all those that resort to Him.

"O Lord," says Arunagiri, "if poverty afflicts a person, these six good qualities desert him." In this is an implied appeal to the Lord to shower His grace on the one that repeats this verse so that poverty may not afflict him.

This verse is a powerful prayer for the removal of the threefold poverty.

[But this inner meditation on the Self (verse 18) is not an easy joke, and no amount of self-effort will be of any avail. It requires a Guru's initiation, because meditation proper presupposes certain inner transformation which is brought about in the act of initiation by a competent Guru.

In verse 16, we have seen that Arunagiri traced *Aviveka* or non-discrimination as the cause, for all practical purposes, of desires. Now, *Aviveka* having been removed with the dawn of *Viveka* (verse 17) and when meditation is attempted at (verse 18), the cause of *Aviveka*, viz., *Avidya* or ignorance, manifests itself. Just as in a war the lower officers take the lead first and only finally the General makes his appearance, so is the case in this inner warfare, too.

If Nama and Rupa are obstacles for union with Sat-chidananda in objects, *Avidya* and its effects are the obstacles in communion with it within. The seeker, when he attempts meditation, realises this. *Avidya* in its variegated form manifests itself and impedes his effort at meditation and so the seeker feels the need for initiation from his Guru, which is echoed in the bewildered cry of his in the verse. It is also to be implied that he beseeches his Guru for necessary initiation.]

VERSE—20

**Aridhaagiya Meipporulukku Adiyeen
Uridhaa Upadesam Unarthiyavaa
Viridhaarana Vikrama Velimaiyoor
Purithaaraga Naaga Purandharane**

*That Supreme Reality, most difficult to attain,
O, Thy experience-Upadesa made this slave gain!
O Great Vessel! O Beloved! O Lord of might and main!
O Pranava, longed by the Devas! O Protector of Heaven!*

“O Lord, Who is like a big boat (to cross this ocean of Samsara), Who is possessed of great valour, Who is liked by all, Who is the Supreme Pranava and the object of longing and meditation by the Devas, Who is the protector of Deva-loka! You gave *Upadesa* from within (Initiation by way of inner Experience) such that it made this slave of Thine entitled for that Supreme Reality that is (otherwise) most difficult to attain. O, What a wonder!”

EXPLANATION

Samsara or this phenomenal life is compared to an ocean because it has no end. A person who finds himself in mid-sea has no hope of reaching the shore. The ocean is so vast, the shores are so far off (almost shoreless!) and the waters are so deep with many cruel animals in it that it is impossible for one to ever hope of reaching the shore. If such a person suddenly finds a big boat nearby, what would be his joy? So is the Lord in this ocean of Samsara. Mortal existence is also so difficult to cross over. There are innumerable snares, such as lust, greed, etc., that swallow a person like the shark, etc., in the ocean. The law of Karma is so inexorable that it creates an endless chain of reactions that one can never hope to break them and get freed from transmigratory life. The Lord is the only refuge,

and devotion to Him is the method. Arunagiri says that the Lord is like a *big* boat, meaning thereby that there is no dearth of place in it; any number of persons can take refuge in Him at a time and He can save all of them..

The Lord is possessed of Great Valour. One of His valorous deeds we shall recount here. Once Rishi Narada, with all the Devas and Munis, performed a sacrifice from which emanated a terrible goat. It started doing great havoc, and it roamed about the three worlds causing fear to all. Narada and others went to Mount Kailasa to seek Lord Siva's help. On their way they met the little boy, Lord Skanda, who enquired of them the purpose of their mission. When the matter was related to Him, the Lord sent Veerabahu devar, the chief of His assistants, to get the goat by the horns. Veerabahu devar went in search of it and finally finding it in Brahmaloaka brought it before the Lord. At the request of all, Lord Skanda made the goat His *Vahana* or vehicle and blessed the Devas, saying "Now you can go to the world, continue your Yajna and complete it without any hindrance." This He did when He was yet a little boy.

The Lord is liked by His devotees as He grants whatever they want—both of this world and the other. His form is most beautiful and enchanting. Even to think of Him is pleasing.

The Lord recovered Devaloka from Surapadma and restored Indra and all the other gods to their original posts. They therefore always meditate upon Him as the Supreme Lord, as the essence of Pranava or Om.

"Such a great Lord gave Upadesa to me, a totally undeserving person—His slave! Is it not a wonder?"— exclaims Arunagiri. Why? Because the earlier life of Arunagiri was one of sheer debauchery. Probably he had a trace of love for Lord Murugan, and that was enough for the Lord to show His compassion and give Upadesa to Arunagiri. This is something unique and no doubt a wonder. And the Upadesa given was also indeed unique.

What kind of Upadesa was given? That which entitled

him to that Supreme Reality which is most difficult of attainment. Normally, initiation or Upadesa is given orally, by uttering certain Mantras into the ears of the disciple. But it will not at once entitle one to the Supreme. One has to do great Sadhana after this initiation, to attain God. There is then the initiation by touch or even by thought-transference. But all these have to be followed up by Sadhana to reach the Goal.

The initiation Arunagiri received was something different—it was experience-Upadesa, Upadesa by way of direct, inner experience. This experience-Upadesa is more than the verbal-Upadesa of verses 8 and 11; there it is "*Peesudhal*" which is an external act, here it is "*Unarthudhal*" which is an inner experience. What is this experience-Upadesa? The Lord manifests Himself in the heart of the devotee as his very Self, which at once brings Experience. When God thus manifests Himself, the individual or little self stands transcended; even as the sudden flood-waters in a river inundate and swallow up the long-standing stagnated pool-water in the river-bed. The pool-water may be said to be there, but not as it was before; it is now one with the flood-water, partaking of all its qualities and at the same time losing its earlier qualities of isolated existence, limitedness, dirt, etc. Similarly when God manifests, Universal Consciousness supervenes the individual consciousness which, like a drop of water poured into the ocean, loses all its limitations, and experiences the Universal at once. This is experience-Upadesa. "This entitled me *at once* to the Supreme which is most difficult to attain," says Arunagiri. And this is the speciality of this Upadesa! How can this be? God is the Supreme; He is to be attained. But when He, Who is to be attained, manifests Himself within to give the experience-Upadesa, naturally He stands attained also. Thus the most difficult becomes easy of attainment in this experience-Upadesa, because the very act of God's revealing Himself within for the purpose of initiation is itself the act of initiation, which is also God-Experience, and He at once stands attained, too,—all at once. Is this not a wonder?

The Supreme is difficult of attainment, though it is everywhere. It is the support, substratum or the substance of everything. Yet it is difficult to attain, for the simple reason that the mind and senses are extrovert by their nature and search for Him in the outer world of space and time, as an object. God is everywhere, but not as an object conditioned in space and time. He is a peculiar kind of inwardness, the Subject, and never becomes an object. Any amount of search without will not bring us near God. One is, therefore, required to do Tapas, develop virtues, long for God and engage oneself in spiritual meditation,—all to bring about this inwardness of consciousness. Finally God appears to give initiation. Hence the Supreme is said to be difficult of attainment.

God is the substratum of even the one who searches. He is the real Searcher, the only Knower. He is the Consciousness that seeks to know. When He is the Knower, who is to know Him and how can He become the Known? He is always the Knower, and can never become the known. Hence a search for God as an object to be known is fruitless. When the seeking consciousness ceases from all seeking and rests in itself, it knows itself as the sought. God has, therefore, to be experienced within, ceasing from the externalising activities of the senses and mind. Implying all this Arunagiri says that the Lord gave him Upadesa through inner experience, within the core of the heart, where all the dissipated rays of the mind are to be collected. The attainment of God is most difficult (nay, impossible) when the wrong method is adopted, but it becomes a simple affair, a matter of personal and immediate experience, when the approach is proper; hence the need for initiation by a competent Guru. God is not realised so long as He is sought outside, nor is He attained when He stands outside and gives initiation. He has to manifest Himself within—the Consciousness has to rest in itself, and then He is realised. How this happens, no one can say. It is a mystery, a wonder. And hence the exclamation of the saint, "O Lord, what a wonder, Your Upadesa entitled me to the Supreme." Look

within, search within, find within and experience within—seems to be the silent teaching of Arunagiri.

[In response to his prayer (verse 19), the Guru now initiates him into the technique of meditation, by way of inner experience and transformation of consciousness, which will entitle him to the experience of the Absolute in due course of time.

This initiation is more than the verbal instruction or *Hitopadesa* of verses 8 and 11; because while "*Peesudhal*" or speaking is an external act, "*Unarthudhal*" is an inner experience. Now it is actual initiation through inner revelation.

As we have seen in verses 8 and 11, though this initiation in the case of saint Arunagiri resulted in an instantaneous realisation of the Absolute, in the case of the seeker it is not an immediate attainment but only initiation into the technique of meditation, by a transformation of consciousness, an assiduous practice of which would eventually entitle him to the Absolute which is otherwise most difficult of attainment.]

VERSE—21

**Karudhaa Maravaa Nerikaana Enakku
Iruthaal Vanasanthara Enru Isaivaai
Varadhaa Murugaa Mayil Vaagananee
Viradhaa Surasoora Vipaadane**

*Non-thinking and non-forgetting state, I to attain,
Your two Foot-Lotuses to confer, When will You deign?
O Granter of boons! O Muruga! O Peacock-rider!
O Protector! O terrible Surapadma-cleaver!*

“O Peacock-vehicled Lord Muruga, Who art the granter of boons, Who art avowed (to protect devotees), Who rent the Asura Surapadma into two halves (with Thy Vel)! When wilt Thou condescend to grant me Thine two Lotus-Feet, that I may attain that non-thinking and non-forgetting state (of Mukti)?”

EXPLANATION

The Peacock-vehicled Lord is the granter of boons. He confers boons on His devotees very easily, in the same measure in which they ask, if their prayer is sincere. No sincere prayer goes unanswered by the Lord. He is Lord Murugan—one possessed of undecaying beauty, eternal youth.

In his battle with the Lord, Surapadma finally took the form of a huge Mango tree and the Lord's *Vel* pierced it into two halves. At once Surapadma assumed his original form. Again the *Vel* cleaved him into two and threw the two parts into the sea. The mighty *Vel* of Lord Murugan could alone do it. He is thus the destroyer of the terrible Surapadma.

Arunagiri prays to the Lord to condescend to grant him His two Lotus-like Feet. Why? To attain *Mukti*, or that state wherein there is neither thinking nor forgetting.

There is a Yogic state wherein there is neither thinking nor forgetting, which is beyond ordinary understanding. Thinking and forgetting are the two functions of the mind. Usually either the mind thinks of an object or not think of it. We do not know of a third state of the mind. But this state of non-thinking and non-forgetting, which Arunagiri prays for, is a peculiar one, where the mind itself ceases to exist. Hence it is not capable of being understood. It is, of course, to be differentiated from the state of deep sleep wherein also there is, it may be said, neither thinking nor forgetting. (One need not specially pray to the Lord to grant the state of sleep; He, out of His compassion, has given it to all as a daily experience.) It is different from sleep because in sleep the mind is present though it has withdrawn its functions temporarily. But this state is not merely the cessation of the functions of the mind, but of the mind itself. The mind gets absorbed into its source, the Atman or the Self or God. Thus it is not merely the non-functioning of the mind, as in sleep, etc., but the non-existence of the mind itself.

This 'non-thinking' and 'non-forgetting' may be said to be in respect of the Atman, in which case the prayer would go as, "O Lord, when wilt Thou grant me that state wherein the Atman is neither thought of nor forgotten?" It means, it refers to the actual state of Realisation or *Mukti*, which is other than the waking state (also deep sleep state) as well as the state of meditation. That we do not think of the Atman in the waking state goes without saying, because we are busy with the world outside. So it is a state of non-thinking, but it is not non-forgetting as we have forgotten the Self in the midst of our activity. In the act of meditation, we try to think of the Self, or God. Hence it is a state of non-forgetting, but it is not non-thinking. Thus the condition of non-thinking and non-forgetting (rather, neither think nor forget) is neither the

waking state nor that of meditation; it is one of actual realisation or *Being*.

Let us see a little deeper. We exist. How do we know of our existence? Do we exercise thinking and then know it? No. Do we, then, forget our existence? No. What is this mystery—we do not think and we do not forget, and yet we know we exist! How do we know our existence, then? By an *awareness*, a state of *being*, which does not involve thinking and forgetting because it is a state in which the awareness is identical with our existence. The question of our thinking or forgetting of ourselves does not arise. Why? We do not feel the necessity for it, because our existence and the consciousness of our existence are one and the same, they are not separate. We exist and also we know that we exist. Can we exist without knowing that we exist? No; it is not possible. We may think that in the state of deep sleep we exist and yet we are not aware of our existence. But it is not so. Even in that state there is awareness of our existence, though not known then; for we make the statement, on waking up, "I had a sound sleep". In sleep we existed and there was consciousness also present. Thus there is no time when we exist and yet are not aware that we exist, which goes to show that our existence and our consciousness of our existence are one and the same. But in the case of objects (including God, as we conceive of Him in our present state of understanding) their existence is separated from our consciousness, and so there is thinking as well as not thinking of them. Hence when existence is outside the ken of consciousness, thinking and forgetting are possible, and are necessitated. But when they become one, as in our own existence, there is neither thinking nor forgetting, nor is there a need for it. In short, where existence and consciousness stand together, where *Sat* becomes *Chit*, or *Sat* is *Chit*, the state of thinking and not thinking is transcended into a peculiar state of Existence-Consciousness, where Existence itself is Consciousness and Consciousness itself is Existence. It is not the existence of Consciousness, or

the consciousness of Existence; but Existence which is Consciousness and Consciousness which is Existence. Even the example of our case is only a crude one, because here consciousness is of the body. But in the case of the state referred to in the verse, it is Consciousness, pure and simple, Consciousness as it is in itself and not in association with anything. It is Moksha, or liberation. It is Consciousness being conscious of itself, without being conscious that it is conscious.

This is the state, for attaining which Arunagiri prays to the Lord. How to get this state? For this he prays to the Lord to grant him His two Lotus Feet. The Lord's feet means the Lord Himself. The granting of the Feet and the attainment of Moksha or God-consciousness are one and the same. God is, to us, an object of worship, an object of meditation, however abstract it may be. He is something other than us, different from us, standing apart from us, to whom we offer worship or upon whom we meditate. He is an object of our worship or meditation. But what Arunagiri prays for is a state different from this, wherein the Lord should become one with us, He should reveal Himself to us, He should condescend to grant His Lotus-Feet to us, to give Himself to us.

We usually meditate on the Lord in various ways, i.e., as being seated in our heart, etc. But all this involves thinking, and this is not what Arunagiri wants; because this meditation on God is not on His essential nature, but on a form and name. Hence this meditation does not confer on us that state. Then how do we get it? Meditation should be on God as He is, as the divisionless Reality. God is the Supreme, He is the Absolute, He is Omnipresent existence. He should be meditated upon as such. In this meditation the Absolute or the Omnipresence of God leaves nothing outside it; even the meditator does not exist independent of it. When thus the meditative consciousness in us attempts to meditate on the Lord as the Absolute and when this meditation becomes intense enough, it, instead of being con-

scious of its individuality, becomes so absorbed in the consciousness of the Absolute that it gets lost in the latter which alone remains. As a wave that sinks in the ocean, trying to fathom its depth, would get absorbed into the ocean and be the ocean itself, the two being nothing but water, so does the Jiva melt into the Absolute in its honest effort to meditate on the Lord as the divisionless Existence. When thus the individual is swallowed up in the Absolute, there is no Jiva to think or forget! He alone is, in His pristine glory, as the all-pervading presence. No individuality is left. To this Arunagiri refers as 'the granting of the two Lotus-Feet', by which the Tamil scriptures denote that state where "I-ness and Mine-ness are abolished." Thus when the Lord's Feet are granted, i.e., when God manifests Himself, the individual ceases to be, i.e., 'I-ness' and 'Mine-ness' cease. With the ceasing of the individual, the two states of 'non-thinking' (i.e., the waking state wherein God is forgotten) and 'non-forgetting' (i.e., the state of meditation wherein God is thought of) are transcended and the Jiva rests in God, which is the state of Mukti or Liberation. Hence the prayer for the granting of the two Foot-Lotuses so as to obtain the state of non-thinking and non-forgetting. This blessing the saint prays for from Lord Murugan Who is a quick conferer of boons on His devotees.

[With the inner transformation brought about by the Guru's initiation (verse 20), the seeker's aspiration for realisation is intensified and the soul longs for the highest attainment of *Mukti*, or that state where there is neither thinking nor forgetting, i.e., an establishment in God-Consciousness, which can come by the revelation or granting of the Lord's Feet, i.e., when the sense of "I-ness" and "mine-ness" goes.]

VERSE—22

Kaalaik Kumaresan Enak Karudhi
Thaalaip Paniyat Tavam Eaidhiyavaa
Paalaikkuzhal Valli Padham Paniyum
Veelai Surabhoopathi Meeruvaiye

*To meditate on You, O Lord, as 'Kumaresan, of Youth
Permanent,
And bow to Your Feet; how did I reach to this Tapas great!
O Lord, Who bows to the charming Valli's Feet!
O Muruga! O Deva-Chief! O Great like the Meru Mount!*

"O Lord Muruga, the Commander-in-chief of the Devas, the Great one like the Mount Meru, Who bowed to the feet of Valli Devi of beautiful hairs! What a wonder, I have been blessed to attain to that state of austerity (*Tapas*) as to bow to Thy Lotus-Feet meditating on Thee as Lord Kumaresan of Eternal Youth!"

EXPLANATION

Mount Meru is said to be the greatest mountain on earth. One cannot imagine its length or breadth, or its greatness. It is regarded as the axis of this earth. So is the Lord, beyond human understanding and description, the support of all.

Lord Skanda was the Commander-in-Chief of the army of Devas. He organised their forces, fought against the Asura Surapadma and killed him with his entire army. Even so the Lord organises the virtuous qualities in His devotees, gives a battle to the terrible Asura egoism and destroys him and his retinue of lust, anger, greed, etc. The destruction of the lower nature in man is necessary in order that one's mind may become tranquil which is a necessary prerequisite for meditation on the Lord. The lower nature,

due to its extrovert nature, does not allow the mind to be tranquil and steady. Hence the need for its destruction.

Lord Murugan bowed to Valli Devi, His Divine Consort. According to the Tamil scriptures, Lord Skanda has two Consorts—Valli and Deivayanai. Valli represents *Ichha Sakti* and Deivayanai *Kriya Sakti*. Deivayanai was the daughter of Indra who was troubled by Surapadma. After the Asura was killed by the Lord, in acknowledgment of his indebtedness to Him, Indra gave his daughter Deivayanai in marriage to Lord Skanda. The marriage was conducted with all Vedic rites (Kriyas) in a big assemblage of gods, Rishis and men, at Tirupparankundram in South India. Hence she is said to represent the *Kriya Sakti*, or power of Action. But Valli's marriage with the Lord was of a peculiar nature. She loved Lord Murugan intensely and was resolved to marry none but Him. But she did not know where He was and how to attain Him. Yet her love for the Lord was so much that the Lord Himself went in search of her, beseeched her to marry Him, and got her married by stealing her away at dead of night from her home. Thus Valli is referred to as *Ichha Sakti* or power of Desire.

Reference to Valli and the Lord's bowing to her shows that the Lord is ever eager to seek to help His devotees, who often long for Him but know not the means of attaining Him. This shows that if one is sincere and honest in one's seeking, God comes of Himself to the devotee and shows the method of attaining Him.

"It is indeed a wonder that I attained to that amount of *Tapas* as to bow to the Feet of such a Lord, duly meditating on Him," rejoices Arunagiri. To be able to meditate on the Lord while bowing to His Feet is indeed a great *Tapas*, a rare attainment, an achievement difficult to get. What kind of meditation is that, that is considered as a great *Tapas* and also so difficult of attainment? To meditate on the Lord as "*Kaalai, Kumaran, Isan.*"—*Kaalai* means Eternal Youth, which refers to Eternal Existence or *Sat*. *Kumaran* means the destroyer of the world-delusion, or *Maya*.

It refers to *Chit* or Knowledge. *Isan* means the over-lord of everything, which is the condition of Supreme Happiness or Bliss or *Ananda*. To meditate on the Lord as *Satchidananda* (Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute) and to bow to His Lotus-Feet,—is it not a supreme state of Tapas or attainment? “How I attained to this Tapas, is indeed a marvel! What shall I say? It is due to Thy grace!” Thus Arunagiri expresses his eternal gratitude to the Lord, Who conferred on the saint this supreme state, in the same way as He, of His own sweet will, conferred upon Valli Devi the status of being His consort.

When we bow to the Lord, we should think of Him not in terms of a name and form, but as *Satchidananda*. Our body should bow to the image or even the picture of the Lord, but the mind should be fixed in the Infinite. Whatever be (the name of) the Lord—Vishnu, Siva, Rama, Krishna, Skanda, Vinayaka, Devi, Christ, etc,—they are essentially the same—*Satchidananda*, just as whatever be the ornament, the substance is only gold. This fact we have to bear in mind when we think of Him or meditate on Him or bow to Him, is what Arunagiri seems to imply.

Thinking of Him as *Satchidananda* and bowing to His Feet may be said to refer, respectively, to the *Svarupa-lakshana* and *Tatastha-lakshana* of God. To bow to the feet means we take the Lord in His manifested form,—whatever the form be,—which is the *Tatastha-lakshana*. It is the relativistic aspect of God, of a manifestation or *Avatara*, for a purpose. It is not that the Lord cannot take that form again or appear again in that form to give *Darshan* to His devotees. He can. But it is not His essential nature or *Svarupa-lakshana*. *Satchidananda* or the Absolute, unconditioned Existence-Knowledge-Bliss is the *Svarupa-lakshana* of God. While the *Tatastha-lakshana* differs with every manifestation, the *Svarupa-lakshana* is the same for all. Hence to bow to any form of God fixing one's mind on the *Svarupa-lakshana* is indeed a state of special blessedness obtained purely by the Lord's grace, because while the

Tatastha-lakshana can be understood by the human mind, Svarupa-lakshana can be *felt* or experienced in the heart only when revealed by the Lord out of His grace.

The idea is that our prayer, worship, meditation, etc., should not merely end with Tatastha-lakshana. The purpose of all these spiritual practices is to attain the Svarupa-lakshana. The former goes by the name of popular religion which is practised by the vast majority of people, according to each one's religious faith and custom. It, therefore, differs from religion to religion. But the latter belongs to mystic religion,—to saints and sages, whether of this religion or that religion, whose experiences are the same whether they be of the East or the West, ancient or modern. There is no difference of opinion among them. The religious quarrels and dogmatic bigotry arise only among the popular religions. Then, are we to dispense with the popular religion or the different methods of worship of God? No, it is not necessary, nor desirable. It provides the initial background for the neophyte to hold his mind on to something, from where he has to go higher. The different religions and religious practices are, therefore, not to be rejected but included and transcended into the mystic religion, even as the college education does not reject, but includes and transcends what has been learnt in the high school. Because there are colleges, we do not dispense with elementary and high schools, for the latter provide the needed basic education without which the higher college education would be impossible. So is the case with the popular religion. Again, all cannot afford to go to college. But yet an high school educated man is better than an illiterate. So also, though all cannot easily attain the mystic vision of God, a man of the popular religion is better than a worldling or non-believer, for whom there is nothing beyond this world. The latter will indulge in all lawlessness and sin, while the former will have fear of God and regard for the moral and spiritual values of life. But we should not stop with it. We should at least know that there is something higher than the popular religion which is only a pointer to

the Higher. The popular religion has to lead to the mystic religion and not to religious bigotry. The *Tatastha-lakshana* and *Svarupa-lakshana* are both of God, the former to lead to the latter.

Thinking of You as Satchidananda, one should bow to Your Feet: Thinking is an inner attitude and bowing is an external act. The right attitude or *Bhava* should follow an action, implies Arunagiri by this. To feel the Omnipresence of the Lord while we bow to His Feet is indicated here. If the right attitude is not there, mere external action becomes meaningless and often hypocritical. And here it is that religions and religious ceremonies, nay even the secular actions of an individual, become lifeless in spite of their external pomp and grandeur.

But then is it not enough if the proper attitude of the Omnipresence of the Lord is maintained, without performing the external act of bowing to the Lord, or offering worship, etc? No, it is not enough. Though God wants our heart and looks to the inner attitude alone, yet the external action is to be performed, maintains Arunagiri; because people cannot understand the inner attitude of such a person but can only see his action, which they take as a mode of conduct for them to follow. People follow what the great ones do. Hence, if a saint keeps quiet, only maintaining his inner feeling of the Omnipresence of God, which people cannot perceive, they will also not do any worship or prayer; nor can they entertain the proper *Bhava* in their heart. Thus bereft of both the inner feeling and outer practices they will be totally lost. Hence the external action of a saint is to be continued to be performed for the sake of others to emulate. They will get the proper inner attitude in course of time, by the Lord's grace. What a profound verse! Arunagiri packs so much of wisdom into a few words.

[The initiation of the Guru (verse 20) has given the disciple the proper technique of meditation on the Lord. Now, when he commences his meditation with this techni-

que and with a true longing to attain liberation (verse 21), due to the immediate impact of the Guru's initiation and the power transmitted by him, the aspirant seems to be successful in his meditation initially, viz., to feel the Absolute or Satchidananda that is behind the form that he worships or meditates upon. This gives him great joy and makes him exclaim the infinite grace of the Lord.]

VERSE—23

**Adiyaik Kuriyaadhu Ariyaamaiyinaal
Mudiyak Kedavoo Muraiyoo Muraiyoo
Vadivikkrama Vel Magipaa Kuramin
Kodiyaip Punarum Guna Bhoodharane**

*Contemplating not on Your Feet, of nescience
Am I to perish totally; is it fair, is it justice?
O Lord with Vel, sharp and valorous! O Embracer of
Huntress,
The Lightning-creeper! O Mountain of Divine Virtues!*

“O Lord with the sharp and valorous *Vel*; O Mountain (embodiment) of Virtues, Who embraced (married) the lightning-creeper-like Valli Devi of the hunter caste! Not meditating on Thy Feet, should I totally perish of ignorance! Is it fair, O Lord, is it justice?”

EXPLANATION

The *Vel* is sharp and valorous. It is sure in its aim. It pierced the Krauncha mountain (Asura) and killed Surapadma and his brothers. The *Vel* represents Jnana or Knowledge, which alone can destroy ignorance. Ignorance is absence of Knowledge or understanding. To take the things of the world as real and to forget the Omnipresence of the Lord, and thereby suffer, is ignorance. The Lord is an embodiment of Virtues. If we meditate on Him, we will imbibe all virtuous qualities from Him and our ignorance will vanish.

The Lord embraced Valli. Valli was of Divine origin but brought up by hunters,—low-caste forest-dwellers. The Jiva, too, is of Divine origin but caught up in the body-mind net of Prakriti. The Lord's embracing Valli denotes that He accepts the Jivas that meditate on Him and take refuge in

Him. Again, Valli Devi is compared to a creeper and the Lord to a mountain—a beautiful simile. Creepers branch out and spread over mountain-slope, to which the latter lends its support. Even so, to the Jivas that resort to or depend on the Lord, the Virtue-mountain, He gives His help and grace.

“O Lord, because of ignorance I do not think of Your Lotus-Feet. I do not meditate on You. But, on that account should I perish, should I be denied Your grace? Is it becoming of Your Divine Nature to withhold Your grace from me? (No.) Did You not go in search of Valli Devi, embrace her and marry her? What was the worth in her, except that she loved You in her heart? Then why not bless me also, who offers prayers to You? Not only that; You are an embodiment of Virtues and therefore You cannot say, ‘I won’t bless You. You should suffer as you have not thought of Me.’ Where is Your virtue or Divine Nature, then? If the bestowal of Your grace on me depends on my fitness, where is the question of *grace*, then? How can You be called a Virtue-mountain? O Lord, You have no justification to deny Your blessing to me,” thus does Arunagiri plead for the Lord’s grace, and the Lord has no arguments or grounds to withhold His grace. So pathetically the saint beseeches the Lord.

In this and in similar other verses, Arunagiri invokes the grace of the Lord, lamenting over his pitiable condition. In these verses he places himself in the condition in which we, ignorant people, are without any *Sadhana-sampatti* or the wealth of spiritual practice. He wants to show that we have to qualify ourselves by the practice of *Sadhana*, which, he points out, is lacking in us, on account of which we suffer and also on account of which the Lord’s grace does not come to us. Saint Arunagiri adopts the indirect method of instilling in us the need for right *Sadhana*, through such verses, if we are to draw the grace of the Lord.

When Arunagiri says, “Should I perish because I have not thought of Your Feet?” he means thereby that we do suffer because we do not contemplate on the Lord, and where-

by he wants to bring home to our minds the need to take to meditation on the Lord in order to be saved.

Why should we suffer, if we do not think of the Lord ? It is the nature of the mind to think something. If it does not think of the Lord, it has naturally to think of objects which exactly is the cause of our suffering. Because of ignorance of the real nature of objects, the mind thinks that it will get happiness from them and it tries to grab them, possess them and enjoy them. Indulgence in objects brings suffering of various kinds in its train, such as disease, anxiety, etc., because they are transitory by their very nature, they wear away the senses, they aggravate the cravings by their tantalising nature. So, to avoid the pains arising out of contact with objects we have to cease from thinking of them, because thinking it is that generates a desire for them. To cease thinking of objects we have to think of the Lord's Lotus Feet. *Vishaya-Chintana* or thinking of objects is to be overcome by *Bhagavat-Chintana* or God-thought. Therefore, in simple words, Arunagiri says, "Think of the Lord, give up ignorance (that objects can give happiness), be freed from suffering and enjoy the Lord's grace." We suffer because we have not obtained His grace, which is due to our not thinking of Him. This is so because of our ignorance which takes the things of the world as real. Hence, giving up ignorance, that is, turning away from the objects; meditating on the Lord, that is, turning our attention within; obtaining His grace, that is, established in Wisdom; we should be saved from the misery of transmigration, is the advice of the saint.

[Though the aspirant seemed to be successful in his meditation initially, it does not last long. At times the mind cannot be concentrated at all in spite of his best efforts, because of the coming into active play of Avidya or Ignorance, and that is the condition portrayed in this verse.

Initially the seeker was able to bow to the Lord's Feet and think of Him, as also feel the Universal Reality (verse 22); but now he is unable even to think of His Feet, because

Avidya or ignorance starts causing an internal disturbance. This inner tumult agonises his mind, but he knows the remedy for it, that of resorting to the Lord. Hence the perplexed cry of his in this verse.

What we implied by the term "*Midi*" in verse 19, is now explicitly stated as "*Ariyaamai*" (Ignorance or Avidya). As the Sadhaka advances, things become clearer.

Avidya cannot be easily dealt with; even to know of its existence and coming into play is itself difficult enough. The unconscious level of our being, wherein are imbedded the *Samskaras* and *Vasanas* of all past deeds, is the seat of *Avidya*, which is touched by the protracted and deep meditation of the Sadhaka. It is then that these (the *Samskaras* and *Vasanas*) get awakened and disturb his once enjoyed meditation (vide verse 22). That is the reason why he is unable to think of the Lord's Feet. These are, however, still in the unconscious level only. Having thus been awakened they try to gush out to the subconscious and conscious levels of the mind, where they will play a greater havoc, which is portrayed in the subsequent verse.]

VERSE—24

**Koorvelvizhi Mangaiyar Kongaiyilee
Seerveen Arul Seeravum Ennumadhoo
Soorveerodu Kunru Tholaittha Nedum
Poorvela Purandhara Bhoopathiye**

*Unto the breasts of women with looks piercing
I join; to me Your Grace won't You think of joining?
O Lord Velava with the Spear, long and fighting,
That rent the Sura and mountain! O Devaloka-King!*

“O Lord with the long, fighting *Vel* that pierced (destroyed) Surapadma with his entire clan and the (Krauncha) mountain! O Lord of Indraloka! Wilt Thou condescend to think of joining Thy grace with (or bestowing Thy grace on) me who (am so means as to) join the breasts of women with *Vel*-like sharp eyes (piercing looks)?”

EXPLANATION

Indra was tortured by the Asura Surapadma. He fought with the Asura, but could not defeat him. Surapadma invaded and virtually burnt Indra's Kingdom (Devaloka or heaven) and made Indra a captive. So is the fire of lust for women that tortures men, burns their hearts and enslaves them. Having failed in his attempts to defeat the Asura, Indra finally resorted to Lord Siva, surrendered himself totally to Him and invoked His grace. Siva appeared as Skanda, whose mighty *Vel* destroyed Surapadma, and saved Indra. Even so when one, rendered helpless by repeated failures in one's effort to overcome lust, resorts to the Lord and surrenders oneself to Him, His *Vel* (as His Grace) comes to one's help and frees one from lust. Hence Arunagiri says, “I am one who join the breasts of women. I am unable to overcome lust. I am unfit for Thy Grace. I do not deserve it. But, O

Lord, Who threw Thy *Vel* on Surapadma and destroyed him and thus saved Indra, wilt Thou not think of showering Thy Grace on me, destroy the lustful nature in me and save me?"

Lust for women is a great obstacle in the aspirant's spiritual evolution. Women for men (and men for women) are like wine, says Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. Their eye-looks are so piercing and endowed with such mysterious power that they can shake the heart of any man, however strong-willed he may be. Their looks are like fire in the presence of which the candles of the hearts of men cannot but melt. No one is seen to be totally free from the deluding influence of the look and the breasts of women. Even great Tapasvins were not spared. "Is there anyone except the sage Narayana," says the Srimad Bhagavata, "who has not been tempted by women at least once?" How true! One might be a Brahmacharin (celibate) or a Sannyasin (renunciate), but he is not exempted from their influence. At least in thought, everyone helplessly becomes a victim to the arrow-like looks of women and to their breasts. Saint Arunagiri himself had suffered much from the influence of public women. He openly confesses his weakness. This verse, too, is sung for the sake of others, knowing the pitiable condition in which all find themselves. There is no other way than an open confession to invoke the Lord's grace to be freed from sex. So Arunagiri sings, for our sake: "Wilt Thou not condescend, O Lord, to bestow Thy blessings on me, who am so mean and sinful as to be enchanted by women?" Should one feel ashamed of repeating this verse? Though one may not admit this publicly, the heart knows it. An open confession is a sure means of expiation and also of invoking the Lord's grace.

Arunagiri weeps bitterly before the Lord over his helplessness, as in verse 9. He repents over his wrong deeds. Repentance is a great purifier; it is the only means of washing of the effects of the wrongs committed in the past. Repentance simultaneously implies a determination not to repeat those acts again. One realises one's folly, realises that

those acts of his are sinful, realises also one's helplessness in controlling them in spite of his best efforts. Here it is that he turns to God for higher help. He weeps before the Lord, confessing his mistake, admitting the inadequacy of mere human effort, and invoking the Lord's intervention. Arunagiri is seen, as it were, standing before the Lord in this condition, as though to represent man's helpless condition. The weeping appeal to the Lord, therefore, implies realisation of one's wrongs, determination to turn away from the evil once and for ever, admission of the limitation of human effort, and the need for it to be backed by Divine grace. It is not mere lip-prayer or showy-weeping that is pictured by the saint, which cannot draw down Divine grace. This and the previous verse move one to tears as one repeats them. They are so worded that they are capable of even bringing about the needed *Bhava* or feeling in the heart of the declaimer, if recited a few times. Thus the saint implies that Divine grace must back human effort for the latter to be successful. Without Divine help, mere human effort falls short, especially in this battle against lust for sex. But effort from our side is necessary, and is implied in the prayer. Why does one pray for God's help unless one has decided to break the evil habit and has also found his effort inadequate? If one is satisfied in the pleasures of sex and feels not the need to refrain from it, does he invoke God's grace? It is only he who once gave himself to sex, and who now wants to give it up but finds his mind still longing for it, that seeks God's grace to turn it away from women and fix it on Him. But, if one prays to the Lord but also cherishes a secret desire within for satisfaction, will His grace descend?

When thus truly invoked, the Lord showers His grace on us, and the joining of His grace will free us from joining women. One 'joining' will break another joining.

Arunagiri compares the bewitching looks of women (especially of public women) to the sharp, piercing *Vel*. The looks of these women can snatch away the determination from the hearts of men and helplessly toss them and make them yield to their evil ways. And, Arunagiri refers to

the *Vel* of Lord Murugan as the only means of help to overcome the effects of the Vel-like piercing looks of women. One 'joining' breaks another. One 'Vel' frees from another. What a comparison and what a composition of words! "Thy *Vel* pierced Surapadma and the Krauncha mountain (Asura). Will Thy grace-Vel not save me from the Vel-like piercing looks of women and their breasts?"

Saints can easily visualise the helpless condition of the weaklings of the world, and they are moved by compassion. What else can they do to help these weaklings out? Philosophy and logic, canons and admonitions, moral instructions and ethical teachings, will not work here. They found that resort to the Lord's Feet for His grace *with an open heart* is the only thing that can help the people. Saint Arunagiri, therefore, addresses the Lord as we would address Him. What a beautiful way of helping the helpless! The malady is a permanent one—generation after generation people will find themselves in this pitiable condition. So a permanent remedy is prescribed in the form of the verse, sung in the first person. A repetition of the verse with an open heart and honesty of feeling is sure to absolve one of one's past evils and draw the Divine Grace. It is not that Arunagiri still suffers from the clutches of women, for he has obtained the Lord's full grace. In one of his *Kandar-alankaram* verses he boldly declares that once for all he has crossed over this mire of women, through His grace. He found that, for us who are still suffering, nothing except weeping to the Lord would be of any avail. Hence this verse. Humanity is specially indebted to Arunagiri for such verses.

The verse may also be translated as: "...Will I, who (am so mean as to) join the breasts of women with eyes (looks) sharp like Vel, be enabled to think, at least hereafter, of obtaining Thy grace?"

[The seeker was unable to contemplate on the Lord's Feet due to the play of Avidya (verse 23). But, why and how does Avidya trouble him? When meditation is commen-

ced in all seriousness, the process of internal clearance begins. It is like sweeping and cleaning a room that has been kept locked for months and years. Lot of dust would lie settled on the ground. When the cleaning process is begun, the dust will rise up and cloud one's vision. It would sometimes be difficult to see where one stands. Some such thing takes place in the Sadhaka's mind now. The *Kama Vasanas* and *Samskaras*—the impressions of earlier enjoyments, of sex in particular,—lying latent within in the unconscious are touched and given a rude shock by deep meditation and they come up to the conscious level. They naturally cloud his understanding, prick his conscience and disturb his mind. The gushing out of the Kama-Vasanas and the impact of their prick on the conscience are, at times, so heavy that not only the Sadhaka is unable to think of the Lord's Feet but also a sense of doubt creeps into his mind as to whether he is at all eligible for God-experience. This is the condition in which he finds himself now. This makes him cry out to the Lord regretting over his past wrongs and pray for expiation (forgiveness) and for the descent of His grace.

Here is the Sadhaka's confession to the Lord which is at once an atonement, which also draws Divine Grace.]

VERSE—25

Meiyeeyena Vevvinai Vaazhvai Ugandhu

Aiyyo Adiyeen Alayath Thagumo

Kaiyo Ayilo Kazhalo Muzhudhum

Seiyooy Mayileeriya Seevagane

*Taking life, of Karmas relentless, as real and rejoicing,
Am I to toss about and whirl? Is it becoming?
Not only Thy hands, Vel and Feet, but Thy whole being
Is red in colour; O Valorous Lord, Peacock-riding!*

“O Peacock-riding Lord, Whose not only Hands, *Vel* and Feet are, but Whose whole being is, red in colour! Taking this (phenomenal) life, of Karmas inexorable, as real, should I, Thy slave, rejoice in it and be tossed about? Is it fair, O Lord?”

EXPLANATION

The Lord's hands are red. They give protection to His devotees. The Lord's hands are “*Abhaya-Karangal*”, that is, the hands that grant fearlessness to devotees, that confer blessings on all. His hands have become red because of endless giving, and giving. The *Vel*, which is Lord Skanda's principal Divine Weapon, is also red, because it pierced through the Asura Surapadma, and is tainted with his blood. His Feet are red due to the constant worship by the Devas as also by devotees.

His hands give protection. His *Vel* grants Wisdom. His Feet confer Moksha. Not only are the Lord's hands, *Vel* and Feet red, but Lord Murugan Himself is red. Red is indicative of uprightness, greatness, beauty, etc., that is, perfection. “O Lord, Thou art perfect. Release me from this imperfect world and show me a perfect way for Perfection,” seems to be the prayer of Arunagiri.

Life on earth is imperfect. This phenomenal life is governed by the inexorable law of Karma. Everything here is determined by this law. The world changes, the body comes into being and perishes, things come together and are separated—all due to the working of the law of Karma. We take these passing things as real and try to seek pleasure in them. The result is suffering.

We are subject to the law of Karma which works relentlessly on everyone, everywhere. Every action of ours produces a reaction. The actions that we perform are called *Karmas*; the reactions that follow them are also called *Karmas*. We have been brought into existence as a result of the reactions of our past deeds, which also continue to govern us. Again the actions that we perform now, produce reactions and lead to further births. Thus *Karmas* are both the cause and effect of our life, and we are totally governed by the law of Karma. This seems to be an endless chain. Naturally, the question arises, as to how to be freed from this. Is there no way out? Yes, there is, says Saint Arunagiri. His solution to the problem is resort to the Perfect Being,—to God Who is Perfect. We are subject to the law of Karma because we have resorted to things that are subject to that law. But if we take refuge in God, in whom the law does not operate, we will be freed from the law. What does this mean?

God is a cosmic being, and the cosmos is a balance of forces, which always maintains its balance. If anything disturbs its balance, it will try to restore it, and in so doing it will redound upon the one who disturbs it, like a rubber ball hit against a wall that comes back to the thrower. It is this reaction from the cosmos in its effort to come back to its harmony that is the working of the law of Karma. To resort to God is, therefore, to be in conformity with this cosmic balance, which is also said to be the state of Yoga—'*Samatvam Yoga Uchyate*'—Balance is said to be Yoga. To contribute to this harmony, to be in tune with it and to be finally established in it, is Yoga, is to seek to be perfect, is to take refuge in God.

Every individual is a centre, as it were, that disturbs the cosmic balance by its desire-prompted actions, and even by its thoughts. Everyone of our actions (including our thoughts) is therefore rewarded by the cosmos, because it is based on a very scientific method of working. Good results follow good actions, and bad from bad. This law of Karma is referred to as unrelenting, since there is no partiality in its working—not one Karma, however small it may be, can go unrewarded. There is no such thing as striking a balance. If one does, say, 10 good Karmas and 8 bad, the latter 8 cannot be cancelled with 8 of the former and only the balance of 2 good enjoyed. No. All the 10 good and all the 8 bad have to be individually rewarded according to each one's intensity. Hence it is called inexorable. This is the reason why we come across good people suffering, though they might not have done any wrong in this life, which is due to their past wrongs. It is also not uncommon to see evil-doers enjoying in this life, for similar reasons. Indeed the law of Karma is terrible and mysterious. But it equally assures one's future good for the good deeds done now, and vice-versa.

The Lord is the Omnipresent Reality or Universal Existence. Our actions produce reactions because they emanate from a particular centre, with a particular motive, which disturbs the cosmic balance. But God, the Universal Being, does not disturb the balance of the cosmos by His actions as they are not motivated by or directed to a particular end. The actions of the Universal Being are also universal, and so they are in consonance with the universal balance. Hence it is said that God's existence is the same as his activity. God's actions are spontaneous, not motivated; and Nature being an expression of God is also spontaneous. Hence to take refuge in God means to approximate oneself to the universal existence of God, that is to become unselfish and unmotivated in one's actions. The more unselfish an action is, the more does it approximate to God; the more is it selfish, the more also is it individualised. Since God is the Universal being and His existence is the same as His activity, all

actions are His. He is the doer and we are but instruments through which He acts. Thus, if the awareness of the universal presence of God and of our being mere instruments is maintained, action will not produce any reaction, as it is neither prompted by a motive nor done with expectation of a specified result. Then whatever happens is His and all right.

This body has been given to us as a result of our past actions. Our (pleasant and painful) experiences in this span of life are already determined by the effects of our past actions that have caused this life. Hence all our experiences will pass away and come to an end one day, when the force of the momentum that caused them ceases. Therefore undue importance is not to be attached to this earthly life. Neither are we to be overjoyed when desirable experiences come, nor are we to be depressed and sunken when undesirable ones present themselves, as both will pass away. Life is transitory. Such a life should not be taken as real, as the all. God is the great Reality, the all-perfect, 'red' in His entire being. He is to be sought always, whatever be one's condition. Otherwise, one is easily tossed about by every little happening of life, like a dry leaf that is thrown hither and thither by the wind. But he who has resorted to God remains calm like a mountain which is not shaken a bit even by the strongest wind. One who holds fast to God, that is, whose mind is fixed on God, is not easily shaken by the passing events in life. He knows that these experiences come and go, but do not touch his inner, real personality. But the man of the world, for whom the things of the world are the only reality, to whom nothing higher exists, is easily carried away by every little incidence in life. If his bank balance fails, he collapses. If his dear ones depart, his life becomes sapless. These come as shocking incidents that break his weak heart. But he who is devoted to God knows that the things of the world are changing and that they will leave him any moment, and so he is not affected by them. Only he who takes them as permanent realities gets a rude shock when they are separated from him, which

is bound to happen because of the working of the law of Karma. Persons and things are brought together and separated by their Karmas, as logs of wood in a river are joined or separated by wind. The law of Karma is no respecter of our joys and sorrows. It works relentlessly. Hence knowing the transitory nature of things of this phenomenal life, because of the working of this law, one should take refuge in that which is 'red', that is, Perfect and Permanent, so that one may not be tossed about by the passing events of this illusory life, says Arunagiri.

Our life is governed by the relentless law of Karma which is merciless. But the law-giver (the Lord) is full of mercy. So long as one does not take refuge in the Lord, the law of Karma works inexorably. Once we surrender ourselves to God, the law loses its hold on us. As long as we take this world as real and ourselves as the doers of deeds and act with the expectation of their fruits, we cannot escape the working of the law. The idea of agency or doership and enjoyership is what makes us subject to the working of the law and is the cause of our bondage. But those who take refuge in the Lord and act as His instruments, for His pleasure, in the participation of His will, without expectation of rewards, as worship of the Lord, go beyond the working of this hard law. Hence resort to the merciful Lord is the only way to be freed from the merciless law of Karma. The law can be overcome only by surrender to the Law-Giver; the Lord's Maya is transcended only by His grace, as Bhagavan Sri Krishna says: "Verily, this divine illusion of Mine, made up of the (three) qualities (of Nature), is difficult to cross over; those who take refuge in Me alone cross over this illusion" (Gita VI-14). The child gets rest in the play of hide and seek only when it touches the granny who initiated and keeps the play going. "O Lord, Thou art the Perfect One. How long should I be mercilessly kicked about by this inexorable Karmas? How long will I rejoice in this world, taking it as real? Grant me proper understanding, *Viveka*. Grant me love for Thy Feet. Save me, O Perfect One, O Peacock-rider, O Glorious one, O Valorous

one! How can Thou be called Perfect, when I, Thy slave, am tormented by this illusory Life? Does my suffering befit Thine all-perfectness? No. Hence save me," is Arunagiri's appeal to the Lord.

[In the process of meditation, the Sadhaka's effort is to transcend or forget the world. But when the inner purification goes on, and the Vasanas and Samskaras come up to the conscious level, they try to revive his past experiences and thus lend reality to the world or life that he tries to forget. This is another phase of the inner tussle of the Sadhaka, similar to the one of the last verse. Hence his cry and resort to the all-perfect Lord, which means a determined and resolute effort at more intense meditation on the Self. As he has been initiated into the proper technique of meditation by his Guru (verse 20), he is not to be easily taken astray by these passing obstacles which are due to the working of the inexorable law of Karma. He knows that the remedy for all obstacles in meditation is meditation itself,—more intense and prolonged. After all the positive will overcome the negative; Divine grace shall come to one's help.

Thus with the confession to the Lord and invoking of His grace (verse 24), the Sadhaka even in the midst of this tempest of Vasanas and Samskaras (Karmas) now forges forth into his meditation on the Self, or the Lord, as a Mass of Perfection.]

VERSE—26

Aaadhaaramileen Arulaip Perave
Neethaan Orusattrum Ninaindhilaiye
Vedhaagama Jnaana Vinodhamano
Theethaa Suraloga Sigaamaniye

*I, Who am supportless, Your grace to get
You too have bestowed not a moment's thought!
Vedas, Agamas, knowledge, actions and the mind even,—
Transcending these art Thou, O Crest-Jewel of Heaven!*

“O Lord, the Crest-Jewel of Devaloka! Who art beyond (the reach of) the Vedas, Agamas, (intellectual) knowledge, (physical) activity and mind! I am supportless, O Lord! (Yet) Thou hast not thought, even for a moment, of my receiving Thy grace (to have God-Experience)!”

EXPLANATION

The Vedas are four and the Siva Agamas are twenty-eight. They glorify God and try to point out the way of attaining Him. They contain the highest wisdom, the mystic revelations of saints and sages. But they also conclude by saying that He is beyond their reach, because God has to be experienced by oneself. Our intellectual understanding, mental processes and bodily activities also cannot take us near God. He is beyond the reach of anything known to us in our present condition of knowing. He stands transcending everything and so He is not attainable by any of these means. “Leaving my delusion on the world which is subject to the law of Karma, I have resorted to Thee alone Who art perfect (as per the previous verse). Therefore, I have now no support of this world; Thou art my only support. But Thou art beyond the reach of the mind, etc. Therefore *my* thinking of Thee and praying to Thee will not help me to have God-

Experience. Thou shouldst think of me now, though for a moment, and that would be enough; that would only bring me Thy grace and Divine-Experience,"—is the appeal of Arunagirinathar.

Does this mean that we need not do any Sadhana but simply expect the grace of the Lord? No. After devoting oneself to the study of scriptures, after an intellectual understanding of God, after putting into practice of what has been learnt and understood, one realises the limitations of the mind and intellect, of all human effort, and then surrenders oneself to the Lord in utter helplessness, knowing fully well that nothing but His grace can reveal the Lord. This is the condition to which Arunagiri seems to drive at, when he says, "O Lord, Thou art beyond the reach of the mind, etc. *I am supportless*. Wilt Thou not think of bestowing Thy grace on me!" A total realisation of the limitations of human endeavour is the pre-condition for the manifestation of Divine grace. The ego that asserts its power should humble itself and feel its nothingness. Where, thus, the ego subsides, God reveals Himself. Where the wave of individuality sinks, the ocean of Universality stands supreme. Where human effort ceases, Divine grace manifests itself.

Why is God beyond the reach of the mind, the Vedas, etc.? God is Infinite, while the mind, etc., are finite. Can the finite know the Infinite? The mind is extrovert by nature, while the Infinite is all-pervading, that is, it is not particularised. The more the mind tries to know God, the more does it externalise itself and thereby alienate itself from God or the Omnipresent Reality. Hence extroverted activities such as reading of scriptures, discussions, etc., cannot approximate one to God. But they help one realise this truth that they cannot help one attain God. On this realisation, when the mind ceases from activity and becomes supportless, i.e., takes refuge in the Lord, in the omnipresent Reality, God's grace is manifest. The mind should cease functioning, then God manifests Himself. The mind cannot attain God so long as it maintains its individuality.

Why not the mind, study of Vedas, etc., help one attain God? All these belong to the phenomenal world, but God is Absolute Reality. Nothing that is phenomenal can touch the Absolute, even as nothing of dream can touch the things of the waking world, because they belong to different realms. One may run a thousand miles in dream, but one cannot reach the real treasure that is beneath one's pillow. So also whatever is done by the mind in the waking consciousness can never help it attune itself to the universal existence of God. Is there no way out, then? Yes, there is, says Arunagiri, which is to become supportless and obtain His grace. But what is this becoming supportless? Let us first study our 'supports' and then see what supportlessness is.

We have various sources of support—our body, relatives, wealth, property, position, etc., are our physical supports. The Jiva in its waking condition depends on these things for its experience and existence. In the dream state, the support of the Jiva is the psychological world or the dream world, which enables the Jiva to have dream-experience. The deep sleep state may appear to be supportless as there is no body, mind, senses, objects, relations or the world, then. But it is not really supportless. The latent and deeply buried impressions of desires, which constitute the unconscious or *Ajnana*, provide the support to the Jiva. It is these that bring back the Jiva to waking once again, for their fulfilment. But for this screen of desires, the Jiva would merge itself in Satchidananda, which it enjoys negatively in sleep through this thin veil of Avidya or unconscious. Thus the supports of the Jiva in the three conditions of waking, dream and deep sleep are the gross, subtle and causal bodies, or the conscious, subconscious and unconscious, respectively. Though these are the 'supports' of the Jiva, they are really the obstacles or barriers for its liberation. The relation which the Jiva has in its three states with the corresponding three bodies is its support from one point of view but is verily an obstacle for God-Experience. Hence to become supportless is to become freed from these 'supports' or obstacles. Now, the question is how to become supportless.

We have seen that nothing we do in dream can help us achieve something in the waking world, because nothing of the former can be taken to the latter, as they belong to different realms. But, though we can carry nothing of the dream world to the waking, 'We' can go from dream to waking, leaving behind everything of the dream. We have only to wake up from dream and we can have the treasure. Even so, the 'I' in us has to wake up to the higher consciousness of God, leaving everything of this phenomenal world, and experience God or enjoy His grace. Nothing of the phenomenal world can be taken there, but the 'I' or the 'Consciousness' can go there.

Waking, dream and deep sleep states are states of consciousness in relation to certain things—the waking in relation to physical, gross objects; the dream to subtle; and the deep sleep to causal. It is the very same consciousness that is said to be in any of these states, according to its association with the three conditions. Though the things of one condition cannot be taken to another, nor can they help us go to the other, 'we' or the consciousness can go from the waking to dream or sleep, and vice versa. If the self-same consciousness can pass from one condition to another, well, it can as well go to yet another condition where it is not in association with anything, but *be itself*. Thus, though what the consciousness does in its association with the different levels of the mind will not help it reach God, yet it can withdraw itself from all associations from each level and remain in itself, as *it is*. If the waking, dream and deep sleep states are the conscious, subconscious and unconscious states, the other is the superconscious state. It is God-Consciousness. Even a moment of this Super-consciousness is enough to bring God-Experience,—nay, it is God-Experience,—because dissociation from all the three conditions means ceasing from individuality, which at once is universalisation of consciousness. When the consciousness knows anything outside itself because of its limitation to the waking, dream and deep sleep states, it is phenomenal experience. But when the consciousness rests in itself in its universal

nature and *knows* itself through itself by being itself, it is not 'knowing' in the ordinary sense of the term. It is being which is also knowing. It is Being-Consciousness, which is superconsciousness, or God-Experience. This is God's thinking, as different from human thinking, also known as God's grace, or the supervening of God-consciousness. How this happens, is a mystery. We cannot say whether a cessation from the three states leads to God-Experience, or God-Experience brings about the cessation of the former. Something happens, and both take place simultaneously. It is a simultaneity of experience—the ceasing from the three states and having God-Experience. Hence it is best attributed to and referred to as God's grace, which baffles all human logic.

Thus, the state of superconsciousness is the 'supportless' state; and meditation is the way leading to it. Meditation is also, therefore, called as the supportless state; just as Yoga is establishment in God, but the various paths leading to the establishment are also called as Yoga, such as Bhakti Yoga, Jnana Yoga, etc.; or just as a Yogi is one who has attained perfection, but those who strive for perfection are also known as Yogis. When one leaves one's delusion on the world and resorts to the Lord who is Perfect, in an act of meditation (verse 25), he becomes supportless and he totally depends on Divine Grace which he invokes. Hence Arunagiri's appeal to the Lord to shower His Grace: "O Lord, You are beyond the reach of the Vedas, mind, etc., and so I am at your mercy now. Yet You have not bestowed a moment's thought of my having Your Grace! Where, then, is the scope of my attaining Divine-Experience? Be, therefore, gracious enough to bestow Your Grace on me."

The last two lines of the verse are also interpreted as:

(1) "O Lord, Who is the subject of (glorification by) the Vedas and Agamas, Who sports and rejoices in giving instructions (or discussions) on Jnana, Who is beyond the reach of the mind!....."

(2) "O Lord, Who has for His pastime the exposition

of the knowledge expounded in the Vedas and Agamas, Who is beyond the reach of the mind!.....”

(3) “O Lord, Who is beyond the reach of the mind that has for its pastime the discussion of the knowledge of the Vedas and Agamas!.....”

[The Jiva that forges forth into meditation, after overcoming the obstacles (verse 25), is able to forget the world and it tries to be supportless. It is now in a peculiar state of inwardness of consciousness that it cannot be said to be in either of the three states of waking, dream or deep sleep. The state of true meditation is different from waking because there is no externalisation of consciousness, i.e., there is no awareness of the world outside, and even of one's own body. That it is not dream is, of course, evident. It is not also deep sleep, because it is not an unconscious state. The Jiva, in its higher reaches of meditation, tries to be in its pure and simple state of *Jivatva* as such, unrelated but with awareness, i.e., it tries to be ‘supportless’. It is not in an actual supportless state, but very close to its borderland, and that is why the Jiva feels the need for the Grace of God, which condition is so vividly portrayed in this verse.

The Sadhaka's greater and greater resort to the Lord, or meditation on the Self, leaves him supportless. But he has not attained a substantial footing in Reality. This is a very critical condition wherein he is in need of the Divine support more than at other times. He feels that a pull from the ‘Above’ is absolutely necessary here. This seems to be a transitional state in meditation, wherein the Jiva consciousness tries to exceed itself, i.e., go beyond itself and touch universal consciousness.

There is a greater self-surrender and dependence on the Lord, i.e., an effort at a more intense meditation on the part of the Jiva to attune itself to the Universal.]

VERSE—27

Minnenigar Vaazhvai Virumbiya Yaan

Enne Vidhiyin Payaningu Idhuvo

Ponne Maniye Porule Arule

Manne Mayileriya Vaanavane

Lo, lightning-like life I eagerly covet!

Why so? Is it so here due to my bad fate?

O Gold! O Gem! O Verity! O Grace-Embodiment!

O King! O Peacock-riding Providence Great!

“O Lord, Who art rare like Gold, Who shinest like a Gem, Who art the Supreme Reality, Who art an embodiment of Grace and Compassion, the (Eternal) King, the Great One that ridest on the peacock! How is it that I eagerly hug this lightning-flash-like transitory life (taking it as real)? Is it due to my fate that it is so here?”

EXPLANATION

Ignorant of the real nature of the Lord, we take this transitory world as real and go after it, says Arunagiri. What is the nature of the Lord? He is the only worthy Object; the objects of the world are perishable. He is like gold, a rare substance which has intrinsic worth, which is self-shining and lasting. He is self-luminous like the gem Carbuncle. He is the Supreme Reality, the source of everything. Above all, He is an embodiment of Compassion, a mass of love, a concrete form of Grace. He is the Eternal King of the Universe, as against the finite nature of the things of the world. He rides on the fast-moving divine peacock, to confer His blessings on devotees, instantaneously.

This life is transitory. Everything here is passing. Change is the character of this world. Like a lightning-flash, life comes and goes. Ere it is perceived, the lightning vani-

shes. So uncertain is life. Now it is, and now it disappears. Even this short, uncertain life is full of pain, suffering and anxiety at every stage. Persons and things are seen to pass away, daily, before our very eyes, yet we cling to them in the vain hope of getting enjoyment from them. This body of ours is itself evanescent and the things of the world are also perishable; either we may pass away at any moment or the things may leave us without notice. Yet the delusion for them does not leave us! "Why is it so?" wonders Arunagiri and adds that it might be due to our fate. We have been eagerly going after and hugging the worldly objects since so many births. Will they leave us easily now for our saying, "I do not want them, I want only God?" No. The world has its hold on us and continues to have, because we wanted it and went after it, though we may not want it now. Often devotees and Sadhakas are unable to find out the reason for the persistence of the impact of worldly objects, misery and suffering, in spite of their sincerely rejecting the worldly objects and seeking God with true love for Him. Devotees who truly dedicate themselves to God, who honestly seek Him, often find themselves in a peculiar predicament of an inner, ununderstandable longing for the world in the form of subtle desires. They are at a loss to know the reason for the same. Arunagiri also finds himself, or rather places himself, in that condition and gives a clue to this perplexing riddle. The things wanted and hugged before come and have their say now, though they are not wanted now, says Arunagiri. This is the reason for the present suffering of devotees. But the saint wants to drive at a greater secret by this. We wanted them before, so they come now; even so, as we do not want them now, they shall leave us when the force that brought them is over. Our present difficulty should not therefore deter us from our pursuit of seeking God. Even as the things wanted before come now, God whom we now sincerely seek will surely come. Thus there is a guarantee that God will come, if we want Him. And, as though to convince us, in the very next verse, the saint gives his glorious spiritual experience of God-vision. The transi-

tory world's persisting impact upon us, in spite of our really wanting God, should not discourage us, but should be a source of inspiration to put forth greater efforts to attain God, which attainment is assured by the very same law that works unfailingly. What an encouragement to dispirited and drooping souls!

Hence realising the transient nature of the life phenomenal, we should turn our attention to God Who is the Supreme Being, the Eternal Reality, the ocean of Compassion, Who is ever ready to help those who take refuge in Him; and the world would soon cease to have its hold on us. To be freed from the clutches of Karmas that bring us again and again to this fleeting life, resort to the Lord is the only means. Hence Arunagiri says, "O Lord, is it due to my (bad) fate that I suffer now taking this evanescent life as real?" Such depressive moods do come in the life of Sadhakas, even after considerable progress. But there is no room for despair, because 'He is an embodiment of compassion, He is the Eternal Reality, the unchanging One.' What a contrasting comparison? Life is transitory, like the lightning-flash that appears and in a moment disappears; the Lord is Eternal and Graceful. Let the drooping spirit therefore find consolation and continue its Sadhana, awaiting the day of the dawn of His grace, is the instruction of the saint.

[When thus the Jiva in the 'supportless' condition continues its meditation steadfastly on the Self, or the Lord, in response to its prayers (verse 26) Divine Grace begins to manifest from within, and God is visualised as a rare Substance, as the self-luminous Reality, as Grace-mass, as the Inner King (as Gold, Gem, etc.) This experience itself is so unique and blissful that he feels a sense of regret for not having taken to spiritual practices earlier but wasted his life so far in going after (the fleeting pleasures of) the phenomenal life. Of course, he reconciles himself saying, "This is so probably due to my Prarabdha Karma (fate)." Thus the meditation is continued and deepened until the Jiva gets a glimpse of Cosmic Consciousness, which is described in the next verse.]

VERSE—28

Aanaa Amudhe Ayilvel Arase
Jnaanaakarane Navilath Thagumo
Yaanaagiya Ennai Vizhungi Verum
Thaanaai Nilai Ninradhu Tharparame

*O Nectar Divine unspoiling! O King with sharp Vel!
O Embodiment of Wisdom! What (is there) further to tell?
That which was, duly swallowing 'me' the individual,
As Mere Existence, was the Reality Transcendent.*

“O unspoiling Divine Nectar! O King with the sharp Vel! O Wisdom-Mass! Can anything be said (further).? (No! Because) Swallowing up (my) individuality constituting I-ness, ‘That’ which was as ‘Mere Existence’ was the Transcendent Reality Itself.”

EXPLANATION

This is a beautiful verse in which Saint Arunagiri reveals the three experiences, in the final stage of meditation, that precede the attainment of the non-dual state which can only be experienced and not given expression to. The three stages of experience are described as ‘Unspoiling Nectar,’ ‘King with sharp Vel,’ and ‘Embodiment of Wisdom.’

Having rejected the sense-objects on account of a thorough understanding of their transient nature, when one resorts to the Lord whole-heartedly, in course of time and by the grace of God, the above experiences come to a Sadhaka.

Indulgence in sense-objects creates nausea, wears away the senses and leads to all sorts of miseries. Not so with God. The more one devotes oneself to God, the more joy does one feel. There is no repulsive reaction from God, as in the case of objects. Thought of God brings a special kind

of joy which cannot be had from any object of the world. The mind that thinks of God gets more and more absorbed in Him, and He is experienced as Divine Nectar, which becomes sweeter and sweeter as one goes on tasting it. More intense thinking of God leads to more absorption in Him. The joy of contemplation on God is so sweet that the devotee does not want to forget Him even for a moment. This is the first experience, though of a highly advanced stage in meditation. Here the Lord is compared to nectar, because once you taste it, it will ever linger in your mind and attract you again and again. Even so is the mind's experience of God, which thrills it and draws it more and more towards itself. This is the first stage.

Then, the second stage is described as 'King with the sharp *Vel*.' The *Vel* represents Wisdom and is often identified with the Lord Who is an embodiment of Knowledge. The *Vel* ever rests on the person of the Lord,—it is one with Him so as to be almost inseparable from Him,—yet it has an individuality of its own.

The *Vel* (Spear) has a long stem, and its leaf is broad in the middle and sharp at the top. The meditative consciousness in the higher reach of meditation is like the *Vel*—deep in thought, broad in vision and sharp in understanding. The joy that was experienced in the first stage draws the Jiva more and more to the Self, and the soul longs for a deeper experience and gets closer to the Self such that it now rests, as it were, on the latter. The collected, pointed and totally concentrated mind gets so much absorbed in meditation that it feels a nearness and oneness with the Self; it almost becomes one with the object of meditation, though its individuality is still there, even as the *Vel* is with the Lord. This is the second stage.

Then comes the third and highest stage of meditation, in which the Lord is experienced as "*Jnaanaakaran*", i.e., an embodiment of Wisdom, an ocean of Satchidananda. The perfectly concentrated mind, which in its essence is also consciousness, due to prolonged resting of itself on the Self in

meditation, merges into its source, the Self or Atman, or the Universal Consciousness that is the substratum for all Jivas. As a river merges into the ocean, losing its name and form, the individual consciousness (the Jiva) loses its individuality and remains one with the Ocean,—becomes the Ocean itself. When the river-water is about to enter the ocean, at the confluence it exclaims, “O how huge is the ocean! Water, and water alone everywhere!” But, before it could understand or try to say anything about its further experience, it is totally mingled with the ocean, it has lost itself and can therefore say nothing. The river has become the ocean itself and the question of saying anything about the ocean does not arise now. Even so is the condition of the Jiva in that final experience, says Arunagiri. The Jiva that is close to the Self, when it deepens its meditation, is like the river-water at the confluence of the ocean. The Jiva exclaims, “*Jnaanaakarane*”—O Embodiment of Wisdom!—“O, it is Light everywhere, on all sides!” And before it could know anything further, it is lost in that Mass of Light. Hence, after saying, “O Embodiment of Wisdom,” Arunagiri exclaims, “Can anything be said further?”

The three progressive stages of experience as Nectar, Lord with the *Vel*, and Embodiment of Wisdom reveal the successive experiences in meditation that precede Divine Experience. In the beginning of meditation there is a dualistic attitude,—the Jiva and the Self, or the devotee and God,—the Jiva meditates *on* and enjoys the bliss *of* the Self. This is denoted by the term nectar which is enjoyed by another. In a higher stage, the dualistic attitude is transcended in that of ‘neither one nor two’, where the Jiva rests on the Self but not yet merged in it, like the *Vel* and the Lord. The highest stage is the non-dual state where the Jiva is absorbed in the Self and the Self alone is, which is signified as Wisdom-Mass. Thus meditation commences with duality, passes through a non-oneness state and finally culminates in the non-dual Experience of the Absolute,—Dvaita and Visishtadvaita lead to Advaita; Bhakti-Yoga and Raja-Yoga culminate in Jnana-Yoga, in the realisation of the Absolute.

"That which is as Mere Existence, absorbing this little 'I' or Jiva consciousness into Itself, is the Absolute. This can only be experienced. How to relate this to another?" says Saint Arunagiri. He has yet given some kind of expression to it. While one is in deep sleep, one does not know what is happening to oneself, where one is, etc. One is wholly lost in sleep. Yet on returning to the waking state, one says, "I enjoyed a blissful sleep. I knew nothing." This is only a vague and faint recollection of something experienced earlier, but it cannot convey the full import of the actual experience. So is the Saint's expression. On returning from that Absolute Experience, Arunagiri gives a glimpse of what the Experience is like, as also the experiences that precede it, so that struggling souls may know, when they have similar experiences, that they are approaching that Grand Experience.

In meditation, the Jiva-consciousness collects itself from all outgoing tendencies and stands 'supportless' as one concentrated essence and tries to fathom the Absolute, which is Pure Consciousness. The Jiva may be compared to a doll made of salt, which in essence is sea-water, a concretised form of the latter. Supposing, the salt-doll wishes to fathom the depth of the ocean and enters it, what will happen to it? As it enters into the sea it starts getting dissolved into the water and finally nothing remains of the doll and only sea-water alone is. Similar may be said to be that Absolute Experience. When the collected Jiva-consciousness tries, in deep meditation, to know God, Who is Satchidananda, it finally merges itself in that Existence-Consciousness-Bliss Absolute, and nothing of the *Jivatva* is left to give an expression of that Experience. When the Jiva-consciousness has melted away, like the salt-doll, who is there to say? So the Saint says that that state cannot be told to another, because not only the experiencing Jiva is not there to explain, but also, in that state, 'others' are also not there to listen to. A doubt may arise as to what happens to the 'other' Jivas? In dream, we see ourselves as well as many other persons. The dream-subject has relations and dealings with the other

dream-objects. Now what happens when we wake up? Does the dream-subject wake up, leaving behind the other objects of dream? No. When the former wakes up, the latter also vanish. The dream-subject together with the other dream-objects vanish in toto. So is the case on the merging of the Jiva-consciousness in the Absolute—neither 'this' Jiva is there (to tell), nor the 'other' Jivas are there (to tell to). The entire phenomenality gets absorbed into Reality, as dream into waking. Such is the condition of the Absolute Experience, which he calls "Mere Existence." In Sanskrit parlance it is known as "*Kevala Asti*". It is *Mere Existence*—not the existence of something, but Existence as such, Existence pure and simple.

That "Mere Existence" Arunagiri refers to as "*Adhu*" which, in Tamil, means "That". It is not He or She, but That. Our usual concepts of Gods and Goddesses as either being Male or Female are all transcended in that Experience Whole. Hence the Saint denotes it by saying "That". That which is the Absolute stands as Mere Existence. That is all. Nothing more can be said about it, says the Saint.

Now, what is the nature of that Absolute Existence that is so attained? It is not a state of *Jadatva*, or a state of inertia, bereft of consciousness. It cannot be. It is also one of Absolute Consciousness and Bliss, because Existence is identical with or is the same as Consciousness. Let us, for the sake of argument, suppose that state of Absolute Existence to be one of inertia. How is it known then? Or, who knows it? It, being *Jada*, cannot know itself. So there must be a conscious principle to know it. Now, if there is another conscious principle that knows the Absolute Existence, then that also should be an absolute one because a limited or finite consciousness cannot know an absolute existence. An absolute consciousness only can know an absolute existence. But there cannot be two absolutes or infinities. Hence the two should be identical, that is, the Absolute Existence is itself Consciousness. It should also be Bliss because it being Absolute there is nothing second to it to limit it and

where there is no limitation of any kind it is freedom, and freedom is Bliss. It is therefore the state of *Satchidananda* or Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute that Arunagiri refers to here as the indescribable state of Experience.

[The Jiva that began to visualise the Self and taste the bliss of meditation (verse 27) draws closer and closer to the Self until it experiences a glimpse of Cosmic Consciousness, which process and attainment are graphically portrayed in this verse.]

With the initiation given by the Guru (verse 20) and the subsequent, determined struggle of the seeker, coupled with the grace of the Lord, he now gets a glimpse of that Grand Experience to be attained. In this glimpse of God-Consciousness, the *Jivatva* is not destroyed but only 'swallowed' up, because Avidya or ignorance, which is the root of Jivatva, is still there, which is disclosed in the next verse. Hence the Jiva again comes down to normal consciousness, after this glimpse in meditation. Thus, though this verse gives Saint Arunagiri's experience of the Absolute, in the case of the seeker it only refers to a glimpse of Cosmic Consciousness.

It will be interesting to note here that in verse 13 it was seen that "*Adhu*" or "That" itself is Murugan, is the Lord with the *Vel*, and is our Guru. The stages of experience mentioned in this verse as "*Aanaa Amudhe—Ayil Vel Arase-Jnaanaakarane*" are in the reverse order in the experience revealed in verse 13 as "*Murugan—Thani Vel Muni—Nam Guru*". This order in the two verses seems to have great significance and reveal certain truths: (1) *Murugan* and *Jnaanaakaran* stand for the Absolute—Advaita; (2) *Thani Vel Muni* and *Ayil Vel Arase* denote oneness and yet difference—Visishtadvaita; and (3) *Nam Guru* and *Aanaa Amudhe* refer to disciple and Guru, and devotee and God, respectively,—Dvaita. Thus in verse 13, it is God coming to the human level; the Absolute manifesting itself in the relative plane—a descending order. In this verse, it is man raising himself to God's level, the relative or the Jiva be-

coming the Absolute—an ascending order. The term “*Adhu*” or “That” is used in both the verses; which, in the earlier case, becomes the Guru and which, in the latter case, the Jiva becomes.

The same experience as was had in verse 12 and 13 may be said to be had now also, but it is had after due Sadhana or effort from his side. We may say that while the former was ‘given’, the latter is ‘attained.’ The experience was given to provide the needed incentive to strive for and attain.]

VERSE—29

Illee Enum Maayaiyil Ittanai Nee
Polleen Ariyaamai Porutthilaiye
Malleepuri Panniru Vaaguvil En
Sollee Punaiyum Sudar Velavane

*Into this Maya non-existent You have me involved;
Alas, this wicked one's ignorance You have not pardoned!
On Your mighty shoulders twelve, valiant to wrestle,
My song-garland You wear, O Lord of Luminous Vel!*

“O Lord, with the luminous *Vel*, Who, on Thine twelve mighty and valiant shoulders that are fit to wrestle, wearest my garland of songs! Thou hast entangled me in this *Maya* which is said to be non-existent. Alas, You have not absolved me, who is of evil-deeds, of my ignorance!”

EXPLANATION

Saint Arunagiri had that most blessed Experience of Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute, as mentioned in the previous verse. After giving that Non-dual experience, the Lord, it would appear, has withdrawn it back from Arunagiri, with a divine purpose. Had the saint been absorbed into Himself and not been made to return to this phenomenal life, how could we get his wonderful works! The Lord wanted Arunagirinathar to sing His glories and reveal his experiences and thus illumine the path to Perfection, to serve as a guiding light to seeking souls. It is not that God will give Divine Experience to someone and get His divine work done through someone else. He who is given something, from him will the work be extracted. This is seen even in this world; he who is highly paid is also given high responsibility and work commensurate with his salary.

It may even appear that only in order to wear these song-garlands that the Lord involved Arunagiri once again into this non-existent Mayaic life, after giving him that grand experience of "Mere Existence".

What is Maya? And why is it said to be non-existent? The Absolute is unconditioned existence and it cannot admit of anything else, and so this world cannot exist in addition to it. If this phenomenal world is admitted a real and independent existence of its own, it would mean the acceptance of a limitation to the Absolute, in which case the Absolute would be no Absolute, which is untenable. It cannot be that something else also exists side by side with the Absolute. Hence (the things of) the world cannot be attributed any real existence. They are only phases of Reality, just as waves in the ocean are only phases of the waters of the ocean. The waves have neither a real existence of their own nor are they essentially different from the ocean. The wave is water, is the ocean. Hence to attribute any independent reality to the waves, apart from the ocean in which they partake of their existence, would only mean ignorance of Truth. So is the case with this *Samsara* or phenomenal existence which has no independent existence apart from *Satchidananda* or the Absolute. But the world is taken as the sole reality, as having a reality of its own, forgetting the underlying Reality, which latter is often even denied its existence. Thus not only a world is seen which does not really exist, but also the great Reality that alone appears as this world is ignored. How strange! What is it due to? This is called *Maya*. To perceive a thing which really is not, and not to see That which alone is, is *Maya*. But, is *Maya* a substantial something? No. It is not that *Maya* has any existence, it is not an entity by itself; it is only a term used to describe our inability to understand the relation, if at all there is any, between the phenomenal and the Real, in our present predicament. That which really is not and which yet appears to be, and whose relation to the Absolute cannot be satisfactorily explained (there being no real relation, as the Absolute cannot admit of any relation) is ex-

plained as Maya. It is only an initial concept introduced to solve the riddleless riddle of phenomenal existence. It is like the 'X' which is employed in algebraic equations, which vanishes together with the problem when the sum is solved. When the Absolute is experienced, there is neither the world nor are we, much less is 'Maya'. Hence Maya is said to be non-existent.

An ignorant man takes the world as a solid reality and all his actions are based on a firm conviction of the reality of the objects of the world. For him no other reality exists, not even God. He wants to acquire and possess things, enjoy them and be happy. The world is indeed his God. Thus to the worldly man, Maya (or the world) is real. But to a sage of Self-realisation, Maya is unreal; it does not exist at all, for he is established in the awareness of God or the Self, in which the phenomenality is transcended. Only the seeker, that too the one who has evolved to a great extent, is in a peculiar condition. To him Maya is neither real nor unreal. He knows that the Absolute or the Lord alone is real and that the world has no real existence. Yet he experiences a world outside with which he has to have dealings. He is still unable to shake off this relative experience. Neither can he negate the world as a saint because he has not realised or experienced the Absolute, nor can he hug it as a worldly man does because he has understood its essenceless nature. Such is the condition of the seeking soul, to whom Maya is 'said to be' non-existent.

This is yet another verse in which Arunagiri places himself in the position of a seeking soul and appeals to the Lord for His Grace, "O Lord, I am of evil deeds and of ignorance. Where is the scope for my redemption if You do not forgive me of my ignorance and shower Your Grace upon me?" The Lord has involved us in this Maya and He alone can release us from it. Hence the prayer to Him. We, who are caught up in Maya, cannot get released from it by our own effort, because we being a product of Maya

or ignorance, all our efforts are within the realm of Maya and are born of ignorance; and as the effect cannot overcome its cause, we cannot get freed from Maya. If our legs are stuck up in mire, can we come out ourselves? If we try to pull out one leg, the other will get planted more deeply. Someone else has to come to our help. Even so, the more we try to extricate ourselves from Maya, the more will we find ourselves entangled in it. Only Divine Grace can save us. Hence the prayer to the Lord.

It will be worthwhile to note that even the so-called self-effort is only a way of working of the Divine Will or the Omnipotence of God, a recognition of which is to draw Divine Grace. If our self-effort can effect our release, where is the Lord's Omnipotence? It cannot be that the Lord is Omnipotent, all-powerful and all-knowing and we also can put forth self-effort and achieve things as we wish. Even as the things of the world cannot have a real and independent existence of their own in addition to the Omnipresent existence of the Lord, or the Absolute, but are only its phases, as already explained, self-effort of the individual cannot, on ultimate analysis, co-exist with the Omnipotence of the Lord. The so-called self-effort can, therefore, be only a way of working of the Will of God. When human effort is in consonance with God's Will, we seem to be successful, though in our ignorance of truth, we may attribute the success to our own effort. And if our effort goes counter to Divine Will, it is a failure. Realising this, we should become humble and surrender ourselves to God so that His Grace might inundate us.

How are we to obtain His Grace? By singing His glories, by prayer, by contemplation, by surrender. Hence Arunagiri praises the Lord, here, as one with twelve strong shoulders and the radiant *Vel*! The twelve arms, says one of the *Kandaralankaaram* verses of the Saint, are one's unfailing help in destroying one's past evils and sins, and the *Vel* is the destroyer of one's ignorance. "O Lord with the twelve shoulders and the Wisdom-Vel, that are capable of

putting an end to one's past Karmas and ignorance! Alas, Thou hast not forgiven my evil deeds and not removed my ignorance! How shall I then get liberated? Kindly therefore condescend to shower Thy Grace at least now," is the heart-melting appeal of Arunagiri, on our behalf, and for our sake.

"You adorn Your shoulders with my songs." In saying this, Arunagiri reveals the fact that Lord Skanda has accepted his works and is pleased to adorn Himself with them, whereby the Saint also hints that those who recite them, especially the *Kandaranubhuti*, will entitle themselves to His grace and be released from this Mayaic life, even as Arunagiri was liberated by His grace.

Thus, worldly life is Mayaic or unsubstantial, into which the Lord put Arunagiri again to adorn Himself with his song-garlands. We, who are in this Mayaic life, are only to re-offer these song-garlands to *Vel-Murugan*, and thus obtain His grace and be freed.

[The Sadhaka, after a glimpse of Cosmic-Consciousness in the higher reaches of his meditation (verse 28), comes down to normal consciousness, because the Mula Avidya or ignorance, which is the essence of individuality or Jivatva, is not as yet destroyed ("*Ariyaamai Porutthilai*"). The "*Pesaa Anubhuti*" of verse 43 is actual God-Experience, since Avidya is totally destroyed before that (in verse 42, "*Ariyaamai Attradhu*"), and is also followed by the confirmation of the grant of the Lord's Lotus-Feet, in verse 44.

The immediate experience on return to world-consciousness is a little distressing to the Sadhaka on account of the diametrically opposite and unreconcilable contrast between the two experiences. In that state of glimpse of God-Consciousness Satchidananda alone was, and that experience convinced him that the world does not really exist; but on return from meditation he has to live in it and deal with it. This predicament of the Sadhaka is touchingly portrayed in this verse.

Probably, at this stage God induces the Sadhaka to compose songs, i.e., record experiences or write books, as he is now endowed with the rare insight into both this life and That experience.]

VERSE—30

Sevvaanuruvil Thigazh Velavan Anru
Ovvaadhadhena Unarvittha Adhu Thaan
Avvaaru Arivaar Arigindradhu Alaal
Evvaaru Oruvarkku Isaivippadhuve

*Crimson sky like Velayudhan gave me that day
That Divine Experience unique; which experience gay,
Unless it is had and experienced as such,—the only way,—
How can that be told to another? Is it something to say!*

“That Divine Experience which Lord Vel-Murugan, Whose form shines like the crimson sky (at sunset), revealed (to me) from within, on that day, as having no comparison to it,—Unless that Experience is had by one as such and experienced as such, how can that be related to another? (It is impossible to relate that Experience.)”

EXPLANATION

The crimson-lit western sky at sunset has a special charm and beauty which cannot be adequately explained in words. There is no comparison to it. It produces a thrill in one's heart. If this is the case with a part of the sky, what about Lord Murugan's shining form, whose not only hands or feet but whose whole being is crimson in colour (verse 25)? He is an embodiment of beauty. He is charm personified. The nearest comparison conceivable is that of the sunset sky which itself is comparisonless. The glory and beauty of the Unknown and Invisible is thus made to be realised through the known and visible, but yet only experienceable and not relatable, beauty of our daily experience, which is only a reflection of the former.

Crimson or redness denotes perfection. The Lord Who

is all-red is a mass of Perfection. That Lord Murugan Who shines like the red-sky revealed an Experience, on that day, to Saint Arunagiri. It was an Experience given by the Supreme Lord not by words but by direct inner revelation. How can there be an equal to that Experience? God has no equal, no comparison,—He is the Absolute, the Supreme, the Whole, the Perfect. God-Experience is also without a comparison and there is, therefore, no question of an equal to it; God and God-Experience are one and the same. God-Experience is not like sensory experience with objects. In sense-experience, the object remains as a separate entity from us. There is the enjoyer and the enjoyed. But in God-Experience, we do not retain our individual existence or experience God as we experience an object. God is the Absolute and Divine Experience comes only when this individuality of ours is dissolved into it.* The individual or the finite cannot experience the Infinite so long as it is a finite. It has to evaporate itself into and become the Infinite, rather be the Infinite, where experience is the same as being. Therefore to have God-Experience is to become God, or be God. Hence that experience is unique and is of a special kind unknown to the mortal.

Now, when was this experience given to Arunagiri? 'That day,' says the Saint. Which day? That day when Arunagiri realised the transitoriness of the world and in true repentance for his mistakes dropped himself down from the temple tower as an act of expiation, with remembrance of God; when God appeared before him, held him up, saved him from death and gave him Experience-Upadesa; when a sinner, an utterly sensuous man was made a saint in one moment! It is 'that day' when the inner transformation took place, when the sinner, at once, became a saint, true to the words of Bhagavan Sri Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita: "Even if the most sinful worships Me, with exclusive devotion, he

Note : Of Course, there are stages in Divine Experience which precede the final at-one-ment and which, too, are all divine in varying intensities.

should be accounted for as a sage, for he has rightly resolved" (IX-30).

What is required is a transformation of the inner personality. That is real death,—death of individuality,—which brings God-Experience. The death of the body is not real death, because the individuality,—the essence of which is *Vasanas*, *Samskaras* and unfulfilled desires,—does not die thereby, but persists and takes another body for its expression and fulfilment. To die as man, and to be born again as man or in any other womb, is no death. To die to the animal and the man in us and be born into the Self or God, as a Saint or God-man, is real death, because we will no more be reborn.

What is the nature of that experience which the Lord gave to Arunagiri on that day? That Experience has not only no comparison, but also it cannot be told to another, says Arunagiri. Why? Because that Experience was not given to him by the Lord by words of mouth. It was a revelation-experience. The Lord revealed Himself to Arunagiri. How can that experience which was not got by words be related through words? So the saint says that unless one has that experience as such, that is, as he had from Lord Murugan,—as inner revelation,—it cannot be had otherwise. There is no other means of attaining it except through personal experience, even as the beauty of the crimson sky has to be seen and enjoyed by oneself. One cannot explain it to others. Then, what to say of higher spiritual experiences. We may wonder, what is the use of Arunagiri's saying that his experience was unique but that it cannot be related to another? It is to create a taste in us, to infuse a longing in us to have that experience. Though the beauty of the crimson sky enjoyed by one cannot be expressed, he can say that he enjoyed that beauty and thereby create a desire in the other to enjoy it and also make him come out of his dwelling at sunset, observe the sky and experience it for himself. Arunagiri, therefore, wants to awaken people, who are sunk in sense-experience and know nothing beyond, to that

Grand Experience by instilling into them a desire for the higher values of life by such verses. When the soul is thus awakened, the work of *Kandar Anubhuti* will provide the needed guidance to it to have God-Experience. This is indeed one of the rare verses in the entire work of *Kandar Anubhuti*. Great Gurus, though they cannot relate their experience to their disciples, can guide them suitably and make them have it for themselves. Though we cannot explain the sweetness of sugar-candy, we can make the other person open his mouth, put a piece into his mouth and make him taste and experience it. Such is the power of Master-souls, the Great ones who have been specially commissioned by God, of whom Saint Arunagirinathar is one rare soul.

Not only is the sugar-candy to be tasted by oneself, it should be done by everyone in the same way, i.e., its sweetness cannot be tasted by seeing it or smelling it but by putting it into the mouth, only. Hence Arunagiri says that unless one has that Experience in the way in which he had, i.e., as inner revelation, it cannot be even experienced otherwise, much less explained. The Lord should choose to reveal It to us and only then can we *know* what It is.

[Though the return to world-consciousness was a little distressing and unreconcilable (verse 29), a remembrance of that glimpse of God-Consciousness (of verse 28) fills the Sadhaka with an inner joy that makes him feel a sense of gratitude to his Guru, or God, who gave him such initiation (vide verse 20) by way of inner experience which led him to that glimpse, though only for a moment. What transformation the Guru brought about within, exclaims the disciple, cannot be related to another; it should be had as such and also experienced as such by each one for oneself.

It is of interest to note that "*Anru*" or 'that day', in the case of the Sadhaka, refers to the day when he received the Experience-Upadesa from his Guru (verse 20) which brought him the glimpse of God-Consciousness (verse 28), for which he expresses his gratitude now. The word "*Unarvittha Adhu*" of this verse has reference to "*Upadesam Unarthiyavaa*" of verse 20.]

VERSE—31

**Paazhvaazhvu Enum Ippadu Maayaiyile
Veezhvaai Ena Ennai Vidhiththanaiye
Thaazhvaanavai Seithanathaam Ulavo
Vaazhvaai Ininee Mayilvaaganane**

*Into this evanescent life of Maya perishable,
Alas, You ordained me to fall and roll!
Are there deeds done of me low and sinful?
O Peacock-riding Lord! May Thou live well!*

“O Peacock-rider! Thou hast ordained me to fall and suffer in this evanescent, phenomenal life of perishable Maya! O Lord, are there sinful and unbecoming deeds done by me in the past (as the cause for this)? May Thou live long!”

EXPLANATION

Life on earth is not lasting. It comes and goes. It is evanescent. This life is as transitory as a dream. Things quickly vanish, leaving no trace of their existence, as in a dream. Hence the phenomenal life is called Mayaic. Maya itself is perishable, i.e., is not a substantial something. It is said to have no beginning but has an end; it ceases when one attains God. Arunagiri therefore refers to Maya as “*Padu*”, or perishable. How evanescent, then, should a world conjured up by this Maya be? Yet it is governed by exact, scientific laws, the most inexorable being the law of Karma. We inevitably reap the fruits of our past deeds; we are responsible for our happiness and suffering. There is no use blaming God or someone else for our present condition. If we suffer this misery of life in a sense-world, it is because we took it as real, wanted it and hugged it, not knowing its illusory nature, and also forgetting God and His greatness.

God does not put one in this Samsara wantonly out of hatred or prejudice. He neither hates nor loves anyone. He is the same to all. But His divine law works so preciously that we are rewarded by the fruits of our actions. God is the dispenser of justice and He ordains each one to take birth in such circumstances as would be conducive for the working out of one's past Karmas. He thus paves the way for one's evolution, as no salvation is possible unless the Karmas are worked out. Are we not to be grateful to God for this kind act of His in providing us the necessary ground in the form of this 'transitory world' so that we may work out our Karmas and attain the Eternal Abode? God has created an evanescent world, lest we should be pleased with it even if it be full of pain and suffering. The Gita says that this world is *Anityam* and *Asukham*; it is not merely painful, it is non-lasting also. Though painful, if it were still to be eternal, perhaps we might get attached to it and would like to live here itself permanently! If one dreams of having a vast treasure, perhaps he would like to perpetuate the dream and be a rich man even with the concomitant pains and anxieties. Hence it is that dreams are so construed as to last but for a while; they are *Anitya* compared to waking. And this Mayaic life is so, compared to the waking of God-Consciousness. Hence God has created an evanescent world conjured up by His Maya which is not lasting, and this He has done for our own good. Yet in our ignorance we are accustomed to blame God for our birth and suffering in this world, saying, "O Lord, What a pity, You have ordained me to be born in this world and suffer!" But then there comes a time when we realise that not God but we are responsible for this and that there are past evil deeds of ours on account of which the Lord has made us be born here, which is for our own ultimate good. Then it is that we begin to realise the greatness, mercy and compassion of the Lord, when we cannot but feel grateful to Him and praise Him from the core of our being, "Lord, How compassionate art Thou! May Thou live long!" All this is so touchingly conveyed by Saint Arunagiri in this verse.

Here is yet another verse in which Arunagiri places himself in our condition and prays to the Lord—this verse forms a companion to verses 25 and 27. We suffer because of our past deeds. If we resort to Him, through singing His praise and glorification, we cross over His law and get freed from Samsara. The world-show is often compared to the play of hide and seek. The granny initiates the play and children are subject to the laws of the play only so long as they enjoy the play and do not get tired of it. But the moment a child comes back and touches the granny, he is freed at once from the play and its laws. So long as one takes life as real and enjoys it, one is involved in it. What can the Lord do for it? But getting tired with this Mayaic life, realising its utter essencelessness, if one resorts to the Lord, one's sufferings come to an end. To praise the Lord, to sing His glories, to do Japa, worship, meditation, etc., are the various means of resorting to the Lord to get freed from Samsara. "Due to my past deeds Thou hast put me into this Samsara. But hereafter I will devote myself wholly to Thy glorification only, O Peacock-rider. Live Thou long!"

This verse is also considered as "Nindastuti" or praise through apparent censure. As though dejected with the Lord for mercilessly throwing him in this Mayaic life, Arunagiri says, "O Lord, though I have taken refuge in Thee, and have no other support, yet Thou hast ordained me to revel in this dirty life. Thou hast meted out this unfair treatment to one who has taken refuge in Thee. Anyhow, Thou be long-lived, though I may suffer in Samsara!" Though it may appear to be a *Ninda* or censure of the Lord, it is real love for God expressed by great devotees who feel so much intimacy with Him that they take this liberty of apparently censuring Him. This kind of *Ninda-stuti* songs belong to a different order of devotees who feel their oneness with the Lord.

[Though immediately on return to normal world-consciousness the seeker could not reconcile himself between that glimpse of Cosmic-consciousness and this world-experience (verse 29), things have become clear to him now. He realises the reason now, that there is still some balance of Pra-

rabdha Karma to be worked out, on account of which he has been pushed down. That glimpse coupled with this understanding has reconciled things and an inner joy therefore comes to him which cannot be disturbed by the outer happenings, which are due to his Prarabdha Karmas, and so he feels: "I do not worry; let the body undergo the Prarabdha. I shall be blissful in (meditating on and) singing the glories of the Lord."

"O Lord! Thou art Satchidananda, and that is enough for me; my little, passing world-experience is nothing."—This idea is seen pulsating through the verse. Such moods can be had and maintained only in somewhat advanced stages. This is a peculiar state in which the seeker undergoes the bodily sufferings brought on him by his Karmas, but remains blissful within by maintaining the meditative consciousness, or by inner attunement with God through silent glorification.]

VERSE—32

Kalaiye Patharik Katharit Thalaiyuudu
Alaiye Padumaaru Adhuvaai Vidavo
Kolaiyepuri Vedarkulap Pidithoi
Malaiye Malaikooridu Vaagaiyane

*Excitedly screaming the scriptures, and in the intellect
Waves of confusion to dash, am I to become that?
O Embracer of the hunter-caste she-elephant!
O Mount-rending valorous Lord! O Skanda, the Great!*

“O Lord Skanda, Who art great like a mountain, Who embraced the female-elephant (Valli Devi) of the cruel hunter-caste, Who cleft the Krauncha-mountain (with Thy *Vel*) and Who wearest the victory-garlands! Screaming the scriptures with (feverish) excitement, and waves (of confusion) to dash in my head (i.e., brain or intellect), should I become that? (O Lord, let it not happen.)”

EXPLANATION

Learning has to bring culture and wisdom, and humility has to result from wisdom. Learning is not to become puffed up with pride. Scriptures try to bring home these truths in a variety of ways. They give instances of persons who suffered on account of their vanity due to learning. They also cite references to great men who were humble. They lay down codes of conduct, means for the development of virtues, methods of *Upasana* and contemplation on the Supreme Being, and also reveal the experiences of Realisation. The scriptures are to be studied well, understood in their true connotation, and their instructions practised diligently and God attained. Study is to end in practice and practice in experience. The purpose of learning is to live life truly, is to have an understanding of life and to attain

God-experience. Learning is to be put into practice in daily life. Learning is to live life, and life is to learn. In short, learning is life and life is learning. To attain God, or to have God-experience, is the purpose of life, which is the purpose of learning, too. The great Tamil saint Tiruvalluvar says, "What is the use of learning, if the learned intellectual worships not the Lotus-feet of the Lord (and attains the Lord)?" Our learning should not remain isolated from our living. They should go together. If learning enters into our life and forms part of our being, we become humble, realising the greatness of God; and then we have a true understanding of what the scriptures purport to convey through their variegated teachings. But when it does not become part of us and remains only in the books or in our brains, then it is that we become proud and egoistic and find it difficult to reconcile between the apparently contradicting instructions and then we start contending and entering into heated debates with similar others. And, what happens in religious debates and controversies? Man loses his decorum. He shouts and screams, and decries the other's view. He gets mentally agitated and upset, and feverishly excited. His brain gets confused and confounded. This is what is generally seen among the highly learned in whom their learning has not entered into their hearts but remained only in their intellects. Their whole life goes in studying scriptures with a view to find flaws in them, to enter into controversies with others and parade their vanity. They get caught up in the intricacies of the scriptures by entering into heated arguments, and their learning becomes a bondage; they lose the purpose of learning and the goal of life, too. Hence Arunagiri offers a prayer to the Lord that such a lot may not befall him, which is a warning and a caution to us. "Am I to enter into heated debates, get mentally agitated, scream at the opponent, get my intellect confounded, and thus be lost in my learning and arguments? Lord, let this not happen. Let me not forget that the purpose of learning is to attain *Anubhuti*. Bless me that I may not be distracted and side-tracked by my learning."

Not merely is learning not to lead to debates and discussions, but also is not meant to earn a living, which unfortunately seems to be the aim of the present day education. The education of today does not equip one with the needed knowledge of life,—the knowledge that will give strength to face life, steer clear of all problems in life, and attain the purpose of life. On the other hand, when one steps out of the school or college, he is bewildered and knows not what to do next. In fact life stares at him. He has no aim in life, for his education has not given him that, and he is drifted here and there in search of a job. That is all his aim! The education he had has not prepared him to accept the challenges of life, though it might enable him to secure a job. But simply to secure a job is not the purpose of education and learning. Saint Tiruvalluvar, again, says, "Learn well that which is to be learnt, and then live up to it." "Wisdom is to experience the truth, in one's own experience, of what has been heard or learnt from whatever source." So neither securing a lucrative job, nor wasting one's life in mere reading and debating is the purpose for which learning is meant.

Valli Devi was found by the hunter-king Nambirajan and was brought up in the midst of hunters. Hunters live by killing animals in wild-games. They are cruel by nature. Though Valli lived amidst them, she was of divine nature; she was gentle like elephants, which walk softly, without making sound.

Valli is the Jivatman, and the cruel hunters in whose midst she lived are the mind and senses. The nature of the Jivatman is quite different from that of the latter. While they are ever engaged in the wild-game of sense-pleasure, the Jiva depends on the Lord because it belongs to the Lord. Valli is compared to an elephant and the Lord to a mountain. Mountain and mountain-forests are the abodes of elephants. So is the Lord the real abode of Jivas, not the hunters or the mind and senses (body).

Lord Velayudhan wears victory garlands, dangling over His chest, on account of His victory over Surapadma and

other Asuras. He has the *Vel*, which is the *Victory-Vel*. Lord Skanda's *Vel* killed the Asura Kraunchan who was cursed by Sage Agastya to remain in the form of a mountain till he came to be destroyed by the Lord.

The hands of the Lord that killed the Asuras also embraced Valli Devi. This means that the Lord is a terror to the wicked and a beloved to the devout. He is law and love at once.

To that Lord Velayudhan Saint Arunagiri prays, "O Lord! Thou killed the Asuras and the Krauncha-mountain and wearest Victory-garlands. Thou accepted Valli in Thine Divine-fold. Pray, let not my learning (which is given by Thee: verse 17) lead to vanity and debates; let it bring me *Anubhuti* or God-Experience."

[After the needed reconciliation and the inner joy resulting therefrom (verse 31), the Sadhaka now faces a new kind of danger—twofold in its nature—which he should very carefully avoid. The aspirant, on account of that glimpse of God-consciousness (verse 28), might feel that he has achieved something and might be tempted to exhibit his knowledge by entering into arguments with others on the different scriptures; or, people (Pandits), having known that he has attained something, might approach him to have debates with him on scriptures,—both of which will distract him from his Sadhana and Goal.

Here is, therefore, the Sadhaka's prayer to the Lord,—an earnest struggle,—for not getting entangled in heated discussions with people on scriptures which are vast and which contain apparently contradictory statements and instructions; and thus not to waste his time but to cautiously go ahead with his Sadhana, being mindful of the Great Goal. "O Lord, Am I to be entangled in discussions and thus waste my time! Pray, save me from this."]

VERSE—33

Sinthaakula Illodu Selvamenum
Vinthaadavi Enru Vidapperuveen
Mandhaakini Thandha Varodhayane
Kandaa Murugaa Karunaakarane

*The mind-distressing family, riches and gold,
From this dense forest, when shall I be freed?
O Mandakini-given Incarnation, auspicious and sacred!
O Lord Skanda, O Muruga, O Compassion-embodied!*

“O Lord Skanda! O Muruga! O Embodiment of Compassion! O Boon-incarnation, born of Mandakini! When shall I get freed from this Vindhya-forest like (Samsara of) family and wealth, which cause affliction to the mind?”

EXPLANATION

Samsara is full of pain and suffering. The problems of household life are innumerable. House, wife, children and wealth are the source of troubles. Yet they are very attractive and it is easy to get involved in them. They appear to be pleasing and desirable; they look pleasant so long as they are at a distance, so long as they are not obtained. Man struggles hard to have them and he is restless till he possesses them, but the moment they are got, they lose their charm and become sources of vexation and mental agony. They completely rob man of his peace of mind, and make him restless. The sufferings and anxieties of family life, especially in these days, are too well known to all to be described. Now, having got involved in them, man might want to do away with them, but he cannot. Even if he wants to leave them, they will not leave him. Thus enmeshed, he dies miserably. So agonising, so inextricable, so vexing, so soring are family and wealth that the Saint compares them to the forests

of the Vindhya mountains, in Central India. The ever-green Vindhya-forest is charming and attractive. Those who are attracted by its beauty and enter it, forget themselves in enjoying its charm until they get deep into it. But it is so thick that they find it difficult to trace their way out and are finally consumed by wild beasts of the forest. So is this life with wife, children and wealth. It is attractive, but creates problems after problems and drags man into more and more entanglements so that he gets lost in them, and all his time goes away in trying to solve the problems and free himself from entanglements. He is thus left with no time or energy to devote himself to God. Home and wealth are the destroyers of mental peace, they are great obstacles to spiritual progress, holds Arunagiri.

Though there is nothing wrong with family-life and God can be and has been attained by house-holders, the actual condition in which man generally finds himself is something different. He is tormented from all sides. Arunagiri is a practical saint. He can visualise people's condition. He is specially gifted with this rare art of conveying truths as they are,—not only of the highest spiritual experiences in a mystical language, but also of the miserable worldly life in striking, vivid terms. *Kandaranubhuti* being a treatise on 'Anubhuti' or God-experience, the Saint has to tell things as they are,—whether pleasing to us or not,—which we have to take in their true spirit.

Man gets involved in women and gold almost unwittingly. But when he realises his folly and tries to leave them, he finds it impossible. He is prepared to leave them, but not they. He gets so much entangled that he cannot extricate himself from them, even as one cannot find his way out of the Vindhya-forest. Arunagiri, therefore, very significantly says, "When shall I get freed?" One cannot, by one's own effort, free oneself from them. The more one tries to leave them, the more will they cling to him. The only way is to fix one's mind on God. To get freed from other attachments, have this attachment—the attachment to the Lotus-Feet of

Him (the Lord) Who is unattached, says saint Tiruvalluvar. God only can free us from the clutches of women and gold. Therefore does Arunagiri pray to 'get freed' and not 'leave'. He does not say, "When shall I leave," but says, "When shall I get freed." God's grace is the means for getting rid of this Samsara. The all-merciful and compassionate Lord has to shower His grace on us, to Whom is the prayer of this verse addressed.

Lord Skanda is a boon-incarnation. He was given as a boon by Lord Siva to the Devas. The Devas could not fight against the Asura Surapadma. They were defeated by the Asura and driven out of the heaven. They approached Siva and prayed to Him for help, for the Avatara or divine birth of Skanda. Siva, out of His compassion over their plight, assumed His original form of six faces and smilingly looked at Parvati who was seated by His side. At once, from the third eye (Eye of Wisdom) of each face flashed forth a Light (*Tejas*) of extraordinary brilliance. It filled all space, from infinity to infinity. Siva then withdrew it, handed it over to the wind-god and fire-god, and commanded them to throw it into river Ganga (also known as Mandakini). When Ganga received it, she shelved it into a pond called *Saravanappoigai*, where the Light assumed the form of six beautiful babies on six lotuses. This is the 'Mandakini-given' and 'boon-born' Avatara of Lord Skanda.

The Skanda Avatara signifies the manifestation of the Absolute in the relative plane of the five elements of ether (space), air, fire, water (Ganga) and earth, as described above. It refers to the awakening of the spiritual consciousness in the element-bound mind of the seeker, which is agonised by and engrossed in women and gold, to be freed from which is the prayer of this verse. Another name for Skanda is Murugan, which means 'One who is of eternal youth, beauty and Divine in nature'. He is the Beauty of beauties and the divinity or real value behind all things. The beauty and the value that is seen in objects is but a reflection of His. Our attraction for home and wealth is to be transmut-

ed into higher aspiration for God by resort to Lord Murugan. Whether He is 'Mandakini-given', 'boon-born', Skanda or Murugan, He is an embodiment and outcome of Compassion. To that Lord, Arunagiri prays: "O Lord Skanda, the Devas could not themselves fight the Asura Surapadma. They prayed to Siva and You were born as a boon to them. I am also in a similar condition, unable to overcome the entanglements of home and wealth. Be gracious to be 'born' in me and free me from these, O Ocean of Compassion!"

Saint Arunagiri has long before been freed from these, on 'that day' itself (verse 30). Yet, moved by compassion for us, visualising the pitiable condition in which we worldlings are, he has given us this verse,—an unfailing one to invoke the compassion of the Lord of Compassion. A very recitation of the verse is heart-melting and grace-drawing.

[Though the aspirant does not want to enter into vain discussions (verse 32), he will not be allowed to do so. Learned men will approach him and trouble him. So to avoid this danger he feels the need to renounce his home and property and take to seclusion,—probably on the banks of Mandakini, i.e., the Ganges which is to the north of the Vindhya-mountains,—because home and property, apart from causing mental suffering, bind him to his place whereby people can easily find him and disturb him. But if he takes to a life of seclusion, he can avoid them and also engage himself in undisturbed and protracted meditation for long periods, which is necessary at this stage to attain the Goal.

He now earnestly longs to renounce worldly life for the higher purpose of attaining God, and prays to the Lord for the same.]

VERSE—34

Singaara Madanthaiyar Theeneri Poi
Mangaamal Enakku Varam Tharuvaai
Sankraama Sikhavala Shanmugane
Gangaanadhi Baala Kripaakarane

*Not to get lost in romantic women's evil ways,
And be ruined;—Grant me this boon of grace.
O Lord Shanmukha, with Peacock battle-waging and fierce!
O Divine Son of river Ganga! O Embodiment of Grace!*

“O Lord Shanmukha with the battle-waging Peacock!
O Son of river Ganga! O Embodiment of Grace! Grant me
this boon that I may not be dimmed (in spirit) by going into
the evil ways of enchanting, romantic (public) women.”

EXPLANATION

Sex and ego persist almost till the end, till one attains God-realisation. Especially when one renounces home and wealth and remains in seclusion, there are chances of his going astray into the net of enchanting maidens. Here is, therefore, an appeal to Lord Shanmukha asking for a boon, to be saved from such a pitfall. This is a direct and simple prayer, which is the speciality of this verse. In most of the verses, Arunagiri's prayer is not so direct as in this one. “When will You grant? Should I suffer? How long?”—such are the pathetic appeals in the other verses; but here a direct request, as “Grant me a boon.” This is very significant. This shows that though one may not be troubled by sex or attracted and enchanted by women, yet one can never feel confident enough that he has overcome lust, or that he will not fall a prey to sex. Hence the prayer to the Lord for His grace, as a measure of protection against any chance falling

into the ways of sex, as the same can never be ruled out at any stage.

What is asked for is a 'boon'. A boon is a divine grant, so that the malady is cured for ever, unlike in human effort where the danger is always there. And from whom is this boon asked? From '*Kripaakaran*', that is, an embodiment of Grace. 'Grace' and 'granting a boon' go together. The granting is done *ex-gratia*. It is a 'giving' even where there is no fitness for it. It is a pure act of grace or giving, out of compassion. Such a graceful giving is a boon. And that is what Arunagiri prays for. This lust for women is such that it cannot be totally rooted out by any amount of effort. Personal effort will not be of much avail in this matter. Only those who had the special grace of God were freed from this malady totally. Nothing but Divine Grace can free one from sexual lust. Hence the saint offers a direct prayer to the Lord in this verse asking for a *boon* from the *Embodiment of Grace*. The Lord is also addressed as the Son of river Ganga. We have seen in the previous verse that the Lord was given as a boon to the Devas and was born of river Mandakini. Ganga and Mandakini are the same. The 'Mandakini-born' or 'Son of Ganga' is also the Lord with six faces, of which the sole function of one face is to grant the request of His devotees. He is therefore addressed as Shanmukha. "O Lord Shanmukha, the Son of Ganga! You were given as a boon to the Devas! Now, You grant me a boon,—that I may not fall a victim to sex and thus get lost," is the prayer of Arunagiri.

There seems to be some significance in Arunagiri's referring to Lord Skanda first as 'Mandakini-given' (verse 33) and then as 'Son of Ganga' (verse 34).

The eternal snow peaks of the Himalayas are the source of many a perennial river, of which the *Bhagirathi*, *Mandakini* and *Alakananda* are a few. These three rivers go to make the holy *Ganga* and hence they themselves often go by the name of and identified with the *Ganga*.

There are four places of pilgrimage, most holy to the

devout Hindu, called the *Char-Dham*, in the heart of the Himalayas. They are *Gangotri* (10,400 ft.), *Yamunotri* (10,800 ft.), *Kedarnath* (11,750 ft.) and *Badrinath** (10,350 ft.), from where originate the rivers Bhagirathi, Yamuna, Mandakini and Alakananda, respectively.

The Mandakini, from Kedarnath, rolls down through the places called Gowri Kund, Gupta Kasi, Agastya Muni and reaches Rudraprayag, where it joins the Alakananda which comes from Badrinath through Joshi Muth, Chamoli and Karnaprayag. The joined Mandakini-Alakananda, (called as Alakananda) runs further down to Devaprayag, where it meets with Bhagirathi which comes from Gangotri via Uttar Kasi, Dharasu and Tehri. From Devaprayag, this combined Mandakini-Alakananda-Bhagirathi is known as the Ganga and runs down through Rishikesh to Hardwar, and enters the plains. The Yamuna from Yamunotri joins the Ganga at Allahabad, popularly known as Prayag, and the Ganga finally reaches the ocean at Gangasagar, near Calcutta.

The Mandakini belt is very closely associated with Lord Skanda. If we walk up, along the banks of the Mandakini, from Rudraprayag to Kedarnath, we come across the townships of Agastya Muni, Gupta Kasi, Triyugi Narayan and Gowri Kund on the way. Agastya Muni is a small place on the banks of the Mandakini where sage Agastya performed Tapas or austerity, and there is a temple dedicated to him. On a nearby peak, a few miles from Agastya Muni, is a shrine for Lord Kartikeya or Skanda, worshipped by the Sage. Agastya, as we know, is the foremost devotee of Lord Skanda and is the first of the only two who received *Pranava Upadesa* from Lord Skanda Himself, the other being Saint Arunagirinathar. Triyugi Narayan is the place where the marriage of Parvati or Gowri with Lord Siva took place,—at the instance of the gods, for giving Skanda to them—which was officiated by Brahma and Vishnu, and the sacrificial fire

*These four places are respectively 156, 140, 130 and 185 miles from Rishikesh.

lit during the occasion is still kept burning. Gowri Kund is a place, about 7 miles below Kedarnath, where there is a natural hot-spring which was Parvati's bathing-pool, on account of which it is so named. Kedarnath, the abode of Lord Siva, is at the base of the Kedar peak which is also called Kailasa. The huge Siva-Linga in the temple at Kedarnath is perhaps the biggest in the world. As one stands behind the Kedarnath temple and takes a look, one is awe-inspired by the snow-capped, heaven-touching peaks of Kedar, which lift one's spirit to divine ecstasy. The curvative descent of Mandakini from the bottom of these snow-peaks looks as though the Ganges is descending from the heavens to this mortal plane. At the very source of Mandakini, right at the bottom of the snow-peaks, which may be about 3 miles beyond Kedarnath, there is a charming lake, heavenly in appearance, a glimpse of which at once raises one's consciousness to divine heights. This lake, in all probability, might be the one in which the Avatara of Skanda took place, when the *Tejas* of Lord Siva which was carried by the Fire-god and Wind-god to the Ganga (Mandakini) was shelved on to a pond. One feels this almost intuitively as one gazes at the snow-peaks and the source of Mandakini, behind Kedarnath.

Sage Agastya having worshipped Lord Skanda and dedicating a temple to Him near Agastya Muni, the marriage of Lord Siva with Parvati having taken place at Triyugi Narayan for the purpose of Skanda Avatara, the bathing place of Parvati being Gowri Kund, and the abode of Siva being Kedarnath, i.e., the eternal snow-clad Kedar peaks, the descent of the Mandakini from the snow-peaks of Kedar, the situation of the lake at the source of Mandakini,—all go to suggest that the divine birth of Lord Skanda could have taken place in that lake. Hence Arunagiri has preferred to refer to the Lord as 'Mandakini-given' first (verse 33) and then as 'Son of Ganga' (verse 34), because Mandakini is its particular name while Ganga is its general name, in the sense that it is also called as Ganga as it forms one of the three rivers that constitute the Ganga. Later on, in verse 50. Arunagiri refers to the Lord as 'son of river' (*Nadi*

Putra) which is still more a general term. Thus reference to Mandakini, Ganga and river, in successive orders, seems to point out that the Lord's birth actually took place on the banks of the Mandakini, which also goes by the name of Ganga, which is also a river.

This is a very powerful verse, though simple, to invoke the Lord's Grace to get over the impulse of sex. What compassion of the Saint to give out such a verse! He cries out to the Lord for Grace, for a boon. The Lord is ever ready to shower His grace. But we should want it! Even the way of asking, He shows through this verse. It appears as though the Lord Himself has sung this verse through Arunagiri, moved by His compassion for the helpless Jivas. A simple verse, a direct one, a powerfully worded one that will bring down a ray of Grace from the Grace-Mass, which is enough to transform our whole being.

[The Sadhaka, in the very initial stages, was tormented by lust, being caught in the net of wife and children (verses 4 and 5); later on, after due *Upadesa* from his Guru, only his mind was tossed about by thought or presence of women (verse 9); and in the advanced stage of meditation, after proper initiation into its technique, only the impressions of past enjoyments surging out from the subconscious and unconscious levels of the mind troubled him (verse 24). Now, after the glimpse of Cosmic Consciousness (verse 28), he almost feels confident that he will no more be disturbed by sex. However, he invokes the special grace of the Lord not to slip into the evil ways again, for the danger is there till one attains liberation. It is of interest to note that his prayer now is not for freedom from sex, as in the previous ones, but only a general, simple prayer as a measure of safety before he takes to a life of renunciation. Reference to 'son of Ganga' suggests that he has left his home and resorted to the banks of the Ganges.

The need for Divine Grace and eternal vigilance on one's part are insisted upon in this verse, to show that one cannot afford to be heedless at any stage.]

VERSE—35

Vidhikaanum Udambai Vidaa Vinaiyeen
Gadhikaana Malarkkazhal Enru Arulvaai
Madhivaanudhal Valliyai Alladhupin
Thudhiyaa Viradhaa Surabhoopathiye

*Of such actions am I as not to leave the Karma-experiencing body,
To attain Mukti, when shall You, Your Lotus-Feet, grant me?
Except Valli, with face radiant like the moon,
To praise none else is Your vow, O Lord of Heaven!*

“O Lord of Devaloka! O Skanda Whose vow (policy divine) is to praise no one except Valli Devi of shining forehead like the (crescent) moon! I am of such Karmas as not to leave (the attachment for) this Karma-experiencing body. When shalt Thou grant me Thine Lotus-Feet that I may attain Liberation?”

EXPLANATION

Karmas are classified into three groups: *Sanchita*, *Prarabdha* and *Agami*. The accumulated effects of actions done in all one's past lives is the Sanchita Karma, which the Jiva carries from birth to birth. Until the Sanchita Karmas are completely exhausted, there is no salvation to the Jiva. A portion of the Sanchita Karmas is taken out and allotted to be worked out in a particular incarnation of the Jiva, which is called the Prarabdha Karma. While the Jiva thus works out its Prarabdha Karmas through a given body, it performs fresh actions, which are called Agami Karmas, which are added to the balance of its Sanchita Karmas. Thus, the Sanchita Karmas of an individual may be compared to a running account of which the Prarabdha Karmas are withdrawals and the Agami Karmas the deposits. While the pre-

sent body works out a certain amount of the Sanchita Karmas, it also adds something to it. This body is at once a product of Prarabdha and a cause of Agami. It would therefore appear that it is impossible to get freed from this cycle of transmigration, because the Sanchita will never get exhausted. A question would naturally arise, is there no way out? Ordinarily speaking, it is humanly not possible to get out of this vicious cycle. Hence Arunagiri says, "I am of such Karmas that I cannot give up my attachment to the body."

Now, the purpose of the body is to undergo the experiences of past Karmas and thus exhaust the Sanchita little by little. It is not supposed to add fresh Karmas, though ordinarily it is impossible to avoid the same, because of the identification of the Jiva with the body and the consequent idea of doership and enjoyership entertained by it. As an antidote to this, the practice of Karma-Yoga is prescribed. To act as an instrument in the hands of the Lord, without expectation of the fruits of one's actions, is the essence of Karma-Yoga. A proper performance of Karma-Yoga, which itself is difficult enough for the human being, will ensure that the present actions do not produce any reaction. But, even if one were to do this successfully, one would only be able to work out one's past Karmas without adding fresh Karmas to the stock of Sanchita. Even then one's Sanchita Karmas would be quite enough to bring some births more. But scriptures and saints are never tired of saying that the purpose of human life is to attain God-realisation, not in a future birth, but right now in this birth itself. Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj says: "The goal of life is God-realisation. Attain this in this very birth, nay this very second!" How to do it, is the question. There is only one way, i.e., God should 'grant His Lotus-Feet', says Arunagiri. God, God's Lotus-Feet, Grace, Divine Consciousness, Self, Wisdom—all mean the same. The granting of the Lotus-Feet is an outer act symbolic of an inner transformation in one's consciousness. It is the dawn of Wisdom, the fire of Knowledge, which destroys Karmas to ashes.

The Jiva is a curious mixture of two elements,—the Purusha and Prakriti; the light of Consciousness, and the mind, senses, etc. The Purusha is pure Consciousness bereft of activity, and Prakriti is activity but without Consciousness. In the Jiva, there is a mutual transference of properties of the one to the other, and as a result the Consciousness or Jiva feels itself as the doer and enjoyer, while the mind and body appear to be self-conscious. The Jiva-consciousness may identify itself with the mind and body, and regard itself as the experiencer of past Karmas and creator of new Karmas; or it may identify itself with the pure Consciousness or the Self and remain untouched by the three kinds of Karmas. The Jiva has for births been identifying itself with the body that this wrong identification has become almost natural to it, and it has forgotten its true identity. When the Lord's Feet are granted, when Wisdom dawns, when the Jiva is awakened to its pristine nature of pure Consciousness, when God's Grace descends, the Purusha no more identifies itself with Prakriti and man is freed from the clutches of Karmas. When and how this happens is, of course, a mystery. God's grace is the only way. An ardent longing, sincere prayer, whole-souled dedication to God is the way. Hence Arunagiri's prayer to the Lord to grant His Lotus-Feet, to attain Liberation.

Now, the question is, what happens to one's Prarabdha Karmas that have already begun to work? In the case of an ordinary man, the body works out the Prarabdha and at the same time there accrues Agami Karmas; his cycle of births and deaths is endless. The Karma-Yogin exhausts his Prarabdha, does not create Agami, but leaves his Sanchita untouched. He has to take a few more births to exhaust his Sanchita and attain liberation. But, the Jnanin, who has identified himself with pure Consciousness, remains untouched by the three kinds of Karmas. He may appear, for the onlookers, to undergo the Prarabdha Karmas, but not so to himself. He who remains as pure Awareness, which body can he regard as his and which as others? This body, which the onlookers would regard as his, is, to him, as good as any

other body. Indeed there would be no bodies or matter, at all, but only consciousness flooding everywhere, as he belongs to a different realm of Reality. Just as when one wakes up from dream, the dream-bank, the bank-balance, credit, debit and the multifarious transactions of the dream, together with the dream-subject are wound up and transcended into the unitary waking consciousness, so is the entire phenomenal play of Karmas and the Karma-experiencing subject transcended in God-Consciousness. They belong to two different realms of Reality, and the laws obtaining in one realm do not hold good in another.

Lord Skanda killed Surapadma, released the Devas from his tyranny and restored them to their original positions in Devaloka. Hence He is the Lord of gods and Indraloka.

Valli Devi shines with a brilliant forehead, because of her single-minded devotion to the Lord. From her childhood she had intense love for Lord Murugan and was ever thinking of Him, His divine Lilas, His glories, etc. Her mind was ever absorbed in the Lord, and she was determined to marry only Lord Skanda. Pleased with her earnest longing to attain Him, Lord Murugan went to the fields where Valli Devi was. He praised her, tested her and finally accepted her as His consort. He praised Valli alone because of her total dedication to Him. This was His *Vrata* or policy.

Valli Devi represents the Jiva that longs for union with the Lord. The Lord's policy of praising none but Valli Devi indicates that He seeks to help the ardent souls which reject everything and devote themselves solely to God. To that Lord Skanda is Arunagiri's prayer to grant him His Feet-Lotus.

[The Sadhaka now wants to get rid of even that little Prarabdha Karma which brought him back from that glimpse to world-experience (verse 31), as also the Sanchita and Agami Karmas which might bring him rebirth. He therefore prays to the Lord to grant him His Lotus-Feet, or Liberation.

That he appeals to the Lord whose only *Vrata* or noble policy is to accept longing souls, as in the case of Valli Devi, shows that his aspiration for release from Samsara is so intense.]

VERSE—36

Naathaa Kumaraa Namaenru Aranaar
Oodhaai Yena Oodhiyadhu Epporulthaan
Vedhamudhal Vinnavar Soodumalarap
Paadhaa Kuramin Padhasekharane

*“Prostrations, O Lord Kumara!”—so saying when Siva,
the Great,
Implored You for Upadesa, what secret did You instruct?
Brahma and the gods, on their heads, wear Your Lotus-feet!
O Lord, Your head You adorn with the huntress’ Feet!*

“O Lord, Whose Lotus-like Feet Brahma and other gods adorn their heads with, Who places on His head the Divine Feet of the Lightning-like huntress (Valli Devi)! When Siva bowed to Thee, saying ‘O Lord, *Kumaraya Namah*’ and asked for Upadesa, what is the Upadesa (secret teaching) which Thou gavest to Him?”

EXPLANATION

Lord Siva bowed to Lord Skanda and obtained Upadesa on Pranava. And Arunagiri prays to Lord Skanda to reveal to him that secret Upadesa which He gave to Siva. The occasion for instruction to Siva is narrated as follows in the Skanda Purana.

Once Brahma, with the other gods, went to Mount Kailasa to pay his homage to Lord Siva. After paying homage to and taking leave of Siva, they wended their way back through the abode of Lord Skanda. The Lord, as yet a small boy, was playing with other boys. Brahma out of his pride of being the creator paid no heed and bypassed the Lord. Skanda wanted to teach a lesson to him and called him to His presence. Brahma came and bowed to Lord Skanda, and stood before Him with folded hands.

"What is your work?" asked the Lord.

"Creation," replied Brahma.

"How do you do the work of creation?"

"With the help of the Vedas."

"Do You know the Vedas?"

"Yes."

"If so, repeat," said the Lord.

Brahma started repeating the Rig-Veda, beginning with 'OM'. "Stop," said the Lord, "do you know the meaning of OM?" Brahma tried to explain Om, but could not do it satisfactorily. Skanda thereupon ordered Brahma to be imprisoned, and took over the job of creation upon Himself on the ground that one who does not know full well the meaning of Pranava or Om is not fit to do the work of creation. The gods who had accompanied Brahma went to Lord Siva, reported the matter to Him and prayed for the release of Brahma from his imprisonment. Siva came to Skanda and ordered Him to release Brahma. Though unwilling, for the reason stated above, in obedience to His father's wish, Skanda released Brahma. Brahma and the other Devas realising the greatness of Skanda placed His Feet on their heads and with His permission left for their respective abodes.

Incidentally, Siva, keeping Skanda on His lap, enquired of Him as to whether He knew the meaning of Om and if so to reveal it to Him. Skanda said that the secret of Pranava is not to be told in public but is to be revealed secretly only when approached with an attitude of discipleship. Though Himself the *Svarupa* of Om, and also that Skanda was Himself in another form, yet eager to hear the sweet exposition of Om from the boyish lips of His Son, Siva assumed the attitude of a disciple and bowed to Him saying, "*Natha! Kumara! Namah*" (Prostrations unto Thee, O Lord, O Kumara), and asked for Upadesa. Into the willing ears of Siva, Skanda silently gave Upadesa of the meaning of Pranava. Siva was highly pleased to hear the secret exposition from Skanda, since the latter did it exactly as Siva revealed it to Him earlier. Siva admiringly said: "Yes,

You are right; the meaning of Pranava is precisely the same. Even as the Vedas conclude saying 'Subrahmanyom' and 'Sadasivom', we two are the meaning of Pranava. Those who know its meaning thus, become equal to Me, i.e., attain Me. To know the meaning of the Pranava is the foremost Sadhana for attaining Brahman for those well-versed Sadhus who are settled in their understanding and Sannyasins who are filled with Suddha-Sattva. How can Brahma, who is possessed of the pride of his position, know the meaning? Even Yogis who have purified themselves of their sins in Dhyana do not know this; only My devotees, out of My grace, know it. Dear child, since You are verily Myself, You know this mysterious Pranava. Of all Yogis none but sage Agastya is fit to know the Pranava. Therefore give Upadesa of Om to Agastya, who will become your foremost disciple. Let this *Parampara* (line of instruction) thus continue."

It is evident from the above that Siva took Upadesa of Om from Skanda not because He knew it not but to reveal to the world that Skanda was none other than Himself in every respect. The incident also indicates the method of approach and attainment of spiritual wisdom from a Guru. Also, but for Siva's getting the secret revealed from Skanda, a doubt might arise in the minds of people as to whether Skanda knew the meaning of Pranava at all. Thus, the Pranava-Upadesa-incidence has many secrets behind it.

What Skanda revealed to Siva, that Arunagiri requests the Lord to reveal to him also. And the Lord did reveal it to Arunagiri though, of course, in the same way in which He did it to Lord Siva, i.e., secretly!

Now, Arunagiri does not say what it is that was revealed to him, but leaves it for us to pray to the Lord, as he did, and get it revealed from Him directly and secretly, as in the case of Siva and himself. This being a treatise on *Anubhuti* or God-Experience, the Saint leaves it to us to experience it ourselves. But in his other works he gives out what the Lord revealed to him. He says that where the

Dvaita or dualistic consciousness of 'I' and 'mine' vanishes, there true knowledge dawns. To know this knowledge is to know the secret of Om or Pranava. To know the Knower is Knowledge. And it is also held by some that the Saint has given a clue to this in the other half of the verse itself, when he says that though being the Lord whose Feet adorn the heads of Brahma and other gods, He adorns His head with Valli's Feet. Valli practised such penance as to efface 'I'-ness and 'mineness' and so the Lord placed Her feet on His head, which means where individuality is effaced universality makes itself revealed or accessible. It is held therefore that the instruction given by the Lord to Siva was this—where one loses oneself, there the Lord can be experienced. The Pranava Upadesa reveals the secret of identity or Oneness of everything.

A brief study of Om would not be out of place here. Pranava or Om is verily the Absolute or Brahman. It is also all that is visible here. It is 'this' and 'that', the visible manifestation and the transcendent Reality. It has two aspects—the relative and the Absolute. The three constitutive words of OM, namely, 'A', 'U' and 'M', represent the former; and Om in its transcendent nature is the latter. 'A' represents the waking state in the individual, called *Visva*, and cosmically it is the Universal physical, called *Virat*. It is the Consciousness that animates the waking state and the physical cosmos, respectively. 'U' represents the dream state in the individual, called *Taijasa*, and cosmically it is the Universal subtle, called *Hiranyagarbha*. It is the self-same Consciousness animating the dream state and the subtle cosmos, respectively. 'M' represents the deep sleep state in the individual, called *Prajna*, and cosmically it is the Universal causal, called *Ishvara*. It is, again, the self-same Consciousness animating the deep sleep state and the causal cosmos, respectively. It is not that they are 3 different Consciousnesses, but one and the same Consciousness animating the different levels of manifestation. It is *Visva*, *Taijasa* and *Prajna* in the individual; and *Virat*, *Hiranyagarbha* and *Ishvara* in the cosmic level. But all these are

in relation to the creation. There must, however, be a state unrelated to creation, that is, even prior to creation. What was there even prior to creation? It is pure Om, Pure Consciousness-Existence. But no one can know this, because all have come after creation, and we cannot know what that condition was which was even prior to creation. That condition is the Absolute, transcendent Reality, Om. How did creation arise, then? In that pure Existence-Consciousness there arose the cosmic vibration Om. (How and why, we cannot explain, because we all came after that. The authority in this regard is only the scriptures, which are the revelations of realised saints). Om is also, therefore, known as Sabda-Brahman. And from it, Ishvara (causal), Hiranyagarbha (subtle) and Virat (physical) proceeded. These are also cosmic states. Thus Om is a cosmic vibration which is always present. There was Om as Pure consciousness before creation; in it arose the Cosmic vibration Om, and all this visible Universe came forth. Thus the Absolute and the relative are both Om.

Now, how is this knowledge of 'Om' to help us? When we utter Om, it is not a mere sound uttered by us, but is a vibration created in us. So in the utterance of Om we are supposed to create a vibration in us which will help attune ourselves to the ever-existing Cosmic vibration of Om. Thus a correct recitation of Om with the proper *Bhava* or attitude and understanding will enable one to transcend individuality, in stages, and attune oneself to the different cosmic states of Virat, Hiranyagarbha and Ishvara, and finally with Pure Consciousness itself. Thus we (and everything) have come from Om, have our being in Om and have to merge in Om.

'*Natha Kumara Nama*' appears to be a Tamil rendering of the sacred Shadakshara Mantra '*Kumaraya Namah*' in Sanskrit. This Shadakshara (six-lettered) Mantra is naturally considered to be as sacred as '*Om Saravanabhavaya Namah*' as it was uttered by the Lord (Siva) Whose Mantra is Panchakshara (five-lettered).

Such a great Lord, Who is Om Itself, Who revealed the secret of Pranava to Siva, should keep the Feet of Valli Devi on His head reveals the simplicity and gracious nature of His and shows that He is eager and seeks to help true devotees. Valli Devi did severe penance to attain the Lord. From her childhood, she was determined to marry the Lord and thought of Him always; nothing else in life interested her. Even then, the Lord tested her devotion pretty well before accepting her. But when He was thoroughly satisfied with the genuineness of her love for Him, He even took delight in placing her Feet on His head. The Lord verily becomes the slave of His true devotees. He gives Himself completely to those who give themselves to Him unreservedly. Such is the graciousness and simplicity of the Lord.

[Verses 33 to 35 depicted the earnest longing and the spiritual unrest of the Sadhaka's mind to get a total freedom from all Karmas and the bondage of Samsara.

He therefore feels the need for initiation into the highest mystic meditation to attain Realisation and be freed from Samsara. Hence, as Siva bowed to and sought Pranava Upadesa from Skanda, the Sadhaka, bowing to his Guru, seeks initiation into the secret of Pranava, or the highest type of Nirguna meditation.

Since pure Pranava is considered as the Mantra of the Sannyasins only, it is to be implied that the Sadhaka seeks initiation into Sannyasa when he asks for initiation into Pranava.]

VERSE—37

Girivaai Vidu Vikrama Vel Iraiyan
Parivaaram Enum Padham Meevalaiye
Purivaai Manane Poraiyaam Arivaal
Arivaai Adiyoodum Aganthaiyaiye

*The Lord Who threw His mighty Vel on the mountain,
His Parivaaram (associate) I am—this status to attain,
Do long, O mind! with Knowledge called Serenity
Kill the ego, with its root, in its entirety.*

“O mind! Sincerely long to attain the status of being a *Parivaaram* (associate) of the Lord (*Velayudhan*) Who let go the powerful *Vel* on the (*Krauncha*) mountain (as to rend it); and, with the Knowledge called Serenity cut off this ego, together with its root, completely.”

EXPLANATION

We are ignorant of our own good. We do not know what we should aspire for, what we have to achieve in life. We long for things and positions which will not last long, which will fatten our ego and lead us away from our essential nature. Arunagiri therefore comes to our rescue and points out that which will bring lasting good to us.

In this verse Saint Arunagiri instructs the mind to aspire for a position which is unusual and so different from the ones we generally long for. Our aspiration is, at best, to become a wealthy man, an important person, a minister, a multimillionaire, a business magnate, etc. But Arunagiri's suggestion is quite the contrary, because the aim is of a different nature altogether, i.e., to attain *Anubhuti* or Divine Experience, and not worldly greatness. His instruction is to aspire for the status of being a 'Parivaaram' of

God,—a devotee, Yogi or Jnani. What is the use of this aspiration, we may wonder. While worldly positions fan the fire of ego and make it all-consuming and finally consume oneself, the position of being a 'Parivaaram' of God helps to kill the ego gradually.

The devotees of God are a category by themselves. They are called as *Thondars*, in Tamil. *Thondu* means *Seva* or divine service, and one who has dedicated oneself to the service of God and His devotees is a *Thondar*. Thondars are servants, in the true sense of the term, who regard themselves as slaves of God and His devotees, and who have given themselves to the service of Temples, Ashrams, etc. They devote their whole time to divine service,—cleaning the premises of places of worship, attending to the needs of those that visit temples, maintenance of flower-gardens, wells, etc., and preparation of garlands and sandal-paste for worship in shrine, etc., etc. These services they do absolutely voluntarily. They are not employed workers, nor do they restrict their services to a particular temple or place. They keep on moving from village to village, place to place, and do *Seva* wherever necessary. Most of the temples in villages are uncared for and ill-maintained, partly due to finance and partly due to the negligence of the Temple authorities. Thondars will at once apply themselves to the cleaning of the area around the shrine for devotees to circumambulate, putting lamps at dust, etc. But the authorities of the shrine and the public will, at first, suspect them and ill-treat them, because of their beggarly appearance which they purposely put on. But their love of God and genuine eagerness to serve His devotees is known only to the Indweller. To them, God alone exists, more so in the form of His devotees. To see a devotee is verily to see God, and any service to a devotee is direct service to God Himself. Such is their attitude. At the sight of devotees, they will fall at their feet, entreat them and serve them. But, what reward do they get! More often than not, Thondars are subjected to severe humiliation by the arrogant public and the heartless authorities of Tem-

ples who stick to outer rituals losing the spirit. But the severe they are dealt with, the greater will be their joy, as every such experience deepens their remembrance and recognition of God's presence and the working of His divine hand behind everything. They subject themselves to every kind of humiliation so that there is not the least trace of ego left in them. Thus the Thondars annihilate their ego, by developing serenity through undivided love for God, which draws His grace on them.

Their faith in God is a living faith—a faith which can make God look to their bodily needs, a faith which forces Him to appear in the needed manner to remove their sufferings and difficulties, a faith which often draws God to appear before them in person to prove their greatness to the ungrateful world. A study of the lives of saints, especially that of the Sixty-three Nayanar saints of South India, will reveal the glory, greatness and power of true devotees of God. Gouranga Mahaprabhu, Tulasidas, Ramdas, Jnanadev, Appar, Sundarar, Jnanasambandhar, Sankara, Ramakrishna, Ramana, Sivananda and other devotees could transform people by their mere presence and look. So purifying, so inspiring, so transforming is their company that a living contact with them will ensure God-vision, even as iron is transformed into gold by the touch of the philosopher's stone. Devotees of God solely engage themselves in the service of God, in His worship, in singing His glories, in repeating His Names, in meditation upon Him, in talking to one another about God and His Lilas; in short, they verily exist for Him and in Him, and nothing other than God exists for them. This firm conviction of the omnipresence of God enables them to behold God's presence even in those that abuse and ill-treat them and they ever maintain an undisturbed and serene mind. The ego is thus given no chance to express itself, and it dies a natural death. So glorious it is to be a *parivaaram* or devotee of God that Arunagiri recommends it as the surest means of eradicating the ego and attaining Wisdom and Divine Grace.

The verse, however, seems to convey a deeper significance,—the *Mahavakya Upadesa*.

‘*Iraiyan Parivaaram*’ is an exalted state, and therefore we must try to understand the true significance of the word ‘Parivaaram’. Thondars, Bhaktas or devotees of God are His Parivaaram. But who are Bhaktas? He who has attained *perfection in Yoga* is called a *Yogi*; he who *practises Yoga* to attain perfection is also called a *Yogi*. Similarly, those who have attained God or experienced God-Consciousness are the real Bhaktas or ‘Parivaaram’; though, of course, those who strive to attain that state are also called as Bhaktas. Thus, though in its broadest sense, “*Iraiyan Parivaaram*” includes all devotees, the term cannot be used, with full justification, to denote the ordinary devotees who just attend temple or do worship at a particular hour of the day but engage themselves in mundane activities during the greater part of the day. Those who have given themselves solely to devotional practices and honestly strive to attain God but have not yet tasted the bliss of God are “*Iraiyan Parivaaram*”, but only in a secondary sense. Only those Thondars, Bhaktas, Yogis, Jnanins, who have experienced God-Consciousness, at least as a passing glimpse,—*Jivanmukta*,—are the real ‘Parivaaram’ of God. Hence, the *Periyapuranam*, which treats of the lives of Sixty-three Nayanar saints, also goes by the name of *Tirutthondar Puraanam*. If we do not make the above distinction, we would be equating the routine temple-goers with the exalted Nayanmars and other saints, which will not be justifiable.

The *Jivanmuktas* are the true ‘Parivaaram’ of God. After experience of God-Consciousness, they generally come down partially which may either be due to the residue of their *Prarabdha Karmas* or God’s will, or both; and when they do so, they are characterised by extraordinary love for God and extreme compassion for living beings. They devote themselves to external forms of worship, singing the glory of God and such other activities which may appear to be like those of ordinary Bhaktas. But even then they

will be steady in their inner Bhava or feeling of "*Soham*" (I am He), "*Sivoham*" (I am Siva), "*Aham Brahma Asmi*" (I am Brahman), "I am a Bhakta", "I am God's Parivaaram", or "(Naan) Iraiyan Parivaaram," which are only different formulae conveying the same meaning. Thus has Saint Arunagiri hidden,—very mystically, secretly and deeply,—"*Aham Brahma Asmi*" in "(Naan) Iraiyan Parivaaram"!

To be an "Iraiyan Parivaaram" or a Jivanmukta is to be established in the consciousness of "*Aham Brahma Asmi*." To aspire to become an "Iraiyan Parivaaram" is to aspire to become a Jivanmukta, i.e., to try to get oneself established in the consciousness of "*Aham Brahma Asmi*". How? By a meditation on that Mahavakya, because meditation on "*Aham Brahma Asmi*" will lead to actual Experience or Realisation of "*Aham Brahma Asmi*"—Advaita Bhavana leads to Advaita Avastha. Hence when the mind is asked to aspire for the status of being an "Iraiyan Parivaaram", it is an instruction for meditation on "*Aham Brahma Asmi*".

Now, the instruction to meditate on "*Aham Brahma Asmi*" presupposes, in its turn, initiation into Sannyasa, as the Mahavakya Upadesa is given only at the time of giving Sannyasa.

This verse may, therefore, be said to contain, implied in it, the *Mahavakya Upadesa* of "*Tat Twam Asi*". It is implied, because the Upadesa is always given in secret. When the disciple approaches the Guru for initiation into Sannyasa, i.e., the highest mystic meditation, the Guru gives him Mahavakya Upadesa, saying "*Tat Twam Asi*" (Thou Art That), and the disciple is asked to repeat and meditate on "*Aham Brahma Asmi*" (I am Brahman), which Saint Arunagiri renders as "(Naan) Iraiyan Parivaaram", which status the mind is instructed to aspire for.

It is the way of thinking that makes the consciousness Jiva or Ishvara, man or God, individual or cosmic. If the principle of awareness in us thinks, "I am the body," it verily gets limited to and identified with the body; if it

thinks, "I am pure Consciousness, or God," it doubtless becomes God, it is God. Hence it is said, "As you think, so you become."

The mind or the Jivatman, to whom the instruction is given, in its essential nature belongs to God or universal existence, Satchidananda or pure Consciousness. The Jiva belongs to the nature of the Atman and not of the body or the mind. Due to *Avidya* or ignorance, the universal, which alone exists, has somehow forgotten its universal nature, alienated itself and come to regard itself as an isolated existence, or the Jiva, and asserts its independent existence, which is called *Asmita* or ego. Consequent upon this individualisation, the Jiva sees something outside itself, and worse still develops a liking for certain things and dislike for certain others (*Raga-dvesha*). Finally it gets attached to a particular body and to the things related to it, and clings to them, which is *Abhinivesha*. Now it has to get back to its original condition of universality in order that it may be freed from all these afflictions.

The effective method for this, says Arunagiri, is meditation on God, on one's essential status of belonging to God, i.e. of one's universal nature. It is to think rightly, which is to know (and feel) "I belong to God", "I am Brahman". As a dreaming subject wakes and feels one's true personality, in waking; so does the Jiva wake up to its universal waking condition of Ishvaratva or Brahmanhood, in meditation. The mind is therefore instructed to meditate as, "I belong to God" [(*Naan*) *Iraiyan Parivaaram*] or "I am Brahman" (*Aham Brahma Asmi*).

Suppose a wave or drop in the ocean, which has, due to some error in thinking, regarded itself as isolated from and unconnected with the ocean, starts thinking rightly, how would it think? First, it will feel, "I belong to the ocean", then, "I am a part of the ocean"; then, "I am inseparable from the ocean", then, "I am non-different from the ocean" and finally, "I am the ocean." Though these are stages of rethinking on right

lines (meditation), the wave was ever the ocean, even when it thought itself to be separate from it; and "I am the ocean" is implied right from the beginning stages, i.e., in "I belong to the ocean," etc. assertions. So is the case with the Jiva, which is but a myth, which has, due to wrong thinking, come to regard itself as separated from God. The Jiva is nothing but a speck of consciousness in the Consciousness-Ocean. How can the Jiva, or for that matter anything, be separate from God who is the Omnipresent and all-pervading Reality? Can anything be outside Him? Hence the Jiva that starts aspiring to attain its true status, or 'Being', first meditates, "I belong to God; I am an associate of God; I am God's Parivaaram." Then it feels, "I am part of God, I am inseparable from Him"; then, "I am non-different from God"; and finally it realises, "I am God; I am Brahman; Aham Brahma Asmi". And "Aham Brahma Asmi" feeling runs through the current of meditation right from the beginning, from "(Naan) Iraiyan Parivaaram." Viewed purely from a literal sense, the term "(Naan) Iraiyan Parivaaram" may appear to suggest a dualistic concept, but a mystic insight would reveal that it contains in its bosom the highest secret of Absolute Oneness. The intellect has a limit and when it reaches there it has to give up itself. We should not, therefore, miss to grasp the underlying truth in our over enthusiasm to stick to literal meaning and intellectual understanding.

That it implies "Aham Brahma Asmi" meditation may also be inferred from the latter part of the verse. After instructing the mind to aspire to attain the status of being an "Iraiyan Parivaaram", Arunagiri adds, "O mind! By the Knowledge called Serenity, destroy the ego with its root (Avidya)", by which the effect that would follow from such a meditation is hinted at. And it is interesting to note that the Saint adopts this technique even in the other two verses of instruction to the mind (verses 7 and 14).

When this meditation on "*Aham Brahma Asmi*" is practised by the well-prepared mind, it settles itself in its universal condition of 'Being', which is called Serenity, as

against the condition of Asmita or Jiva, which is 'becoming'. As a wave-crest subsides and becomes one with the calm waters of the deep ocean, the ego-wave of Jiva subsides in the Existence-Ocean of Ishvara. This Knowledge or realisation of 'I am Brahman' brings about the equilibrated condition of universality (i.e., Serenity or *Samatvam*), which is a death-blow not only to the ego but also to its cause, Avidya. Hence Arunagiri says, "Destroy the ego with its root." He does not however make a direct mention of Avidya, because it is not a thing to be perceived, not a thing of positive experience. We are aware of the condition of Ahamkara or ego and its workings in the form of personality consciousness, but not of Avidya, which is a logical presupposition and which is inferred from its effects. So the destruction of the *effect to its root* means the destruction of the cause itself. All this Arunagiri implies when he says, "Destroy the ego to its root."

The ego cannot totally be destroyed unless and until its root-cause Avidya is removed, and no effort of the Jiva can do it as all its efforts presuppose Avidya and ego. Hence meditation on its higher, essential aspect of 'Being' (Serenity) which is also Awareness (Knowledge) is the only royal way to destroy the ego together with its root, Avidya. The help of the higher is to be taken to overcome or subdue the lower. Thus the Jivatva is to be absorbed or withdrawn into Ishvaratva by the most effective method of meditation on "*Aham Brahma Asmi*" by the qualified mind, duly initiated by a competent Master, is Arunagiri's solemn advice.

[When the disciple approaches the Guru with an earnest longing for liberation and seeks initiation into Sannyasa (verse 36), the Guru, being convinced of his fitness and readiness, initiates him into the order of Sannyasa (with the Mahavakya Upadesa, "*Tat Tvam Asi*"—Thou Art That), and instructs him to do meditation on "*Aham Brahma Asmi*"—"(*Naan*) *Iraiyan Parivaaram*"—" (1) belong to God," and with this Knowledge of Serenity or Oneness to destroy the ego totally.

Though the aspirant touched the fringe of Cosmic-Consciousness, he had to return to world-consciousness, because Avidya was not yet destroyed (verses 28 and 29); and unless Avidya is removed, realisation is not possible. Here is therefore the instruction for annihilation of *Avidya*, the root of Ahamkara or ego.

Now, with this initiation and instruction, the disciple is fully equipped to leap into the Absolute. The act of being initiated into Sannyasa is, of course, not the attainment of the goal; it is only a final preparation for it. That meditation on "*Aham Brahma Asmi*" is necessary to break the causal chain i.e. Avidya, Maya or Samsara, and attain Samadhi, is evident from the Guru's instruction, following the initiation, to destroy ego with its cause (Avidya) by the knowledge of one's true identity.]

VERSE—38

**Aadhaaliyai Onru Ariyenai Arat
Theedhaaliyai Aandadhu Seppumatho
Koodhaala Kiraatha Kulikku Iraivaa
Vedhaala Ganam Pugazh Velavane**

*Ignorant, knowing nothing and, still worse,
Evil-natured,—such me You accepted; what to say of this!
O Kudhala-garlanded! O Lord of the huntress!
O Lord Velayudha, hymned by ghosts countless!*

“O Lord Velayudha, Who wears garlands of *Kudhala* flowers! Who is the Husband of the maiden (Valli) of the hunter caste! Who is praised by groups and groups of ghosts! O Lord, I am ruled by ignorance; (I am) a fool who knows nothing and (I am) full of evil nature. Yet (considering me as something of worth) Thou ‘accepted’ me (and made me Thine). What to say (of this gracious act of Thine)!”

EXPLANATION

Kudhala is a kind of plant that grows in hilly region. Its flowers have neither smell nor beauty. The Lord wears the garland of these flowers. This shows the simplicity of the Lord and His gracious nature in accepting things which are not considered useful.

Valli Devi was brought up by the hunters, who are very cruel by nature. The Lord went in search of Valli who belonged to the hunter caste and accepted her of His own accord. This again shows His generous nature. The word ‘Kudhala’ may also govern Valli and then it would mean: “The Husband of the hunter caste Valli who wears the Kudhala-flower garlands.” It shows that Valli was gen-

tle in her nature, like the flower, though she lived in the midst of the cruel hunters.

In the battle with Surapadma and his army, countless Asura-warriors were killed by the Lord's Vel. The ghosts had a nice feast of the heaps and heaps of the dead bodies of the Asuras killed by the Lord; and in their joy, they shouted, danced, sang and glorified the Lord. The Lord enjoyed their songs and praises. What kindness and simplicity of the Lord! He who listens to the chant of the Veda-Mantras repeated to *Svara* or accurate accent by gods, Munis, saints and devotees also listened patiently to the unrhythmic shouts of the devils. All these indicate the kindness and nobility of the Lord in accepting even the meanest of things.

How beautifully Arunagiri addresses the Lord in each verse to suit the prayer he puts forward or the condition he explains in that verse. Arunagiri had led a life of sheer sensuality and sense-gratification, wasting his life in all evil ways. He was full of the low nature. He was one who was immersed in lust and delusion. He had no good qualities or virtues. He was under the full grip of ignorance. Not only that; he was positively bad and inimical to all spiritual enlightenment. Yet, such an utterly worthless person, the Lord accepted and made him His. What a wonder! When Arunagiri recollects this, he could not contain himself. He is baffled and wonderstruck at the infinite mercy of the Lord. Therefore he exclaims, "O Lord, what to say of Your gracious nature! Even me, You accepted and made Yours." The Saint exclaims over this gracious act of the Lord and, somehow, reconciles a bit by reminding himself of the Lord's nature in accepting other useless things. He, therefore, adds, "You wear the (useless) Kudhala-garland; You are the Lord of Valli, of the (cruel) hunter-caste; You accept and even rejoice in the (unbearable, noisy) songs of the goblins." This gives him a little consolation.

This verse gives a ray of hope to even the meanest and

low-natured ones; for there is a chance for their redemption, because the Lord is extremely gracious.

In giving this verse, Arunagiri is conscious of his utterly worthless nature and the greatness of the Lord in accepting him. Herein he expresses his eternal gratitude to the Lord. It is not that the Lord had accepted only Arunagiri. Many devotees and pious men have been blessed by Him. But, they deserved it; they had done penance, they were highly devoted to the Lord, they did service to Him and His devotees, they were full of virtuous qualities. Thus they deserved His grace, and there is no wonder that the Lord accepted them. But Arunagiri's case is quite different. The Lord's acceptance of Arunagiri was an act of sheer grace. It is no wonder, therefore, that the Saint should wonder over the wondrous grace of the Lord!

[To be accepted, initiated into Sannyasa and be instructed upon the Mahavakya Upadesa by a Guru and thus be reminded of one's true identity (verse 37) is of momentous importance to the Sadhaka. He wonders over his fortune and tenders his silent and heart-felt gratitude to his Guru or God for His mercy and compassion.

Though the Guru gives such initiation only to the fit disciples, no Sadhaka can claim or feel to be really fit enough for this initiation; and even in the case of the rarely fit ones, they know that their fitness is due to the grace of the Guru showered upon them and the preparation made by him, earlier.

The Sadhaka, therefore, exclaims and wonders over the rare blessing conferred upon him.]

VERSE—39

Maaveezh Sananam Keda Maayaividaa
Mooveedanai Enru Mudinthidumo
Koovee Kuramin Kodithol Punarum
Dhevee Sivasankara Dhesikane

*For the seven great births to come to a close,
When shall the three Eshanas, inseparable from Maya, cease?
O King! O Embracer of Valli, the tender huntress!
O great Guru of Sankara, of form auspicious!*

“O King (of the universe)! O Lord Who embraces the shoulders of the lightning-like huntress, Valli Devi! O Guru of Sivasankara! In order that the seven (kinds of) great births be destroyed, when shall the three *Eshanas* (desires), which are inseparable from Maya, come to an end?”

EXPLANATION

The cycle of births and deaths is endless. The Jiva or soul goes on taking births after births in different species, according to its desires and Karmas, and this cycle never ceases until it is totally free from all desires. It is said that there are 84 lakh species, and the soul finally attains a human birth, which is the door-way to Salvation. Though there are 84 lakh *Yonis* or species, they are brought under seven categories viz., plants, aquatic creatures, reptiles, birds, animals, human beings and Devas. These seven kinds of birth or *Yonis* are referred to as ‘great’, because in each kind there is innumerable variety or variation. The 84 lakh *Yonis* are said to be distributed among these seven as follows: Devas—14 lakh *Yonis*, human beings—9 lakhs, animals—10 lakhs, birds—10 lakhs, reptiles—11 lakhs,

aquatic creatures—10 lakhs, and plants—20 lakhs. These seven great births are within the domain of Maya.

If one is to be free from births and deaths, the three *Eshanas* should cease. The three *Eshanas* constitute the essence of Maya; they are so inseparable from Maya that they are themselves verily Maya. To be free from the *Eshanas* is to be free from Maya. *Eshana* means desire. It is not desire in its gross form for this or that object, but is the basic craving or urge of the soul for externalisation. Though desires are countless in number, they are boiled down to three, basically. These three *Eshanas* are the causes for the birth of the Jiva in the different wombs—the seven great births. Unless these desires are given up, there is no scope for freedom from birth and death.

The three *Eshanas* are *Arthaishana*, *Putraishana* and *Lokaishana*. *Arthaishana*, which is also known as *Vittai-shana*, is the desire for wealth. One thinks that if he possesses great wealth, he can command all things and enjoy life in its full measure. So people crave for riches. *Putraishana* is the desire for getting children, particularly males, i.e. desire for happiness here and hereafter. One thinks that by getting a male child he will have enjoyment both here and in the other world; because a son is obtained by union with a woman and he is expected to take care of his father in his old age, and also do the necessary religious rites after his death which will entitle him to the enjoyments of the higher regions, such as heaven, etc. *Putraishana* is sometimes known as *Daraishana*. *Lokaishana* is the desire for name and fame in the world, and also for the joys of the heavens. One wishes to be the most prominent person in his place (country), in his field of activity (art, games, etc.) and even in the religious and spiritual fields one wishes to be widely known and revered. In short, wherever one is or whatever one does or however one is, one wishes to be prominent and well-known.

These *Eshanas* are the only obstacles for the attainment of liberation, though they may bring happiness here

and take one to heaven, etc. They are the knots of the heart, the root of Samsara, most difficult to be broken. They limit the consciousness, which is otherwise universal, to a particular body or realm of experience. But for the desires, who would not attain liberation! While thus the desires are the direct obstacles to *Anubhuti*,—Realisation or Experience of the Absolute,—the Lord's Grace is the direct means to attain *Anubhuti*. The Saint, therefore, invokes the grace of the Lord, for an early destruction of the three Eshanas, addressing Him in three ways as, "O King of the Universe," "O Lord Who embraced Valli Devi," and "O Guru of Sivasankara."

If the citizens of a country have any difficulty, they have naturally to approach the king of that country for the redress of their troubles. Even so Arunagiri resorts to the Lord, Who is the 'King of the Universe', for the removal of the Eshanas.

Lord Skanda went to the fields where Valli Devi was, embraced her and finally accepted her as His Consort, by which He released her, forever, from the control of the cruel hunters. Similarly if the Lord's grace envelops the Jiva, the latter can be freed from the grip of the Eshanas. Hence Arunagiri invokes the Lord's grace by addressing Him as 'the embracer of the shoulders of the lightning-like hunter-fostered Valli Devi'.

Again, when the Guru's grace comes in its full measure, one's true identity with the Lord is firmly established. Therefore, the Lord is referred to as 'the Guru Supreme of Lord Siva.'

The desperate cry of the soul which longs for a final release from the grip of the three Eshanas that oppress it is echoed in this verse. A close recitation of the verse would seem to reveal the following secret: "My soul is gripped by the three Eshanas. As You embraced Valli, if You, O Lord, come and embrace my soul, only then can I be freed from the grip of the Eshanas and be liberated from births and deaths. O Lord, when shall You be pleased to

do this? There is no other means. So, pray condescend to do soon." The Lord's Maya, which is constituted of the three Eshanas and which scorches the Jiva in the seven kinds of births, can be overcome by the Lord's grace only. "Verily, this divine illusion of Mine, made up of the (three) qualities (of nature) is difficult to cross over, those who take refuge in Me alone, cross over this illusion," says Lord Krishna (Gita VII-14).

The allotment of the 84 lakh Yonis into the seven groups, from plants to Devas, seems to imply that the soul at the human level cannot directly attain God unless it passes through the remaining 14 lakh Deva Yonis, as each soul has to undergo the experiences of all the 84 lakh Yonis. But, scriptures proclaim that human birth is a rare gift and that its only purpose is to attain God, i.e., human beings can attain God directly. The evolution of the soul from its earliest stages of plants, reptiles, birds, animals, etc., till it reaches the human level is automatic and the law of Karma does not come into play till then. Only at the human level, the soul has freedom,—freedom to do virtuous deeds and attain births in higher realms; or do evil deeds and take births in lower Yonis or even lower worlds; or do spiritual practices and attain God without going to higher or lower realms, i.e., to attain Jivanmukti.

Now, the 'seven births' referred to by Arunagiri in this verse seems to denote birth in the seven higher worlds, because of the adjective '*Maa*' governing it.

There are said to be fourteen worlds—seven lower and seven higher. The seven higher worlds or *Lokas* are Bhur-loka, Bhuvarloka, Svarloka, Maharloka, Janarloka, Taparloka and Satyaloka or Brahmaloika, which are superior or higher realms. The word '*Maa*' means, generally, 'great'; it also means 'superior',—while 'great' is in respect of number, 'superior' is in regard to their contents, constitution, experience of joy and demanding great merit to obtain them. Though these seven higher worlds are superior, they are also within the limits of Maya and the (residue of) Eshanas

are the cause of birth in these Lokas. The adjective 'Maa' (superior) to the 'seven births', and the three Eshanas being the cause of birth in them, therefore, seem to denote these higher seven Lokas rather than the seven kinds of birth into which the 84 lakh Yonis are divided, because the latter are usually referred to as 'seven births' without the adjective 'Maa'.

It is rare to get a human birth, which is usually regarded as the last of the 84 lakh Yonis, and which is meant for the attainment of God. Though the human birth itself is rare and superior, the joys of the higher realms are more refined, subtle and unmixed. A subtle desire may, therefore, arise in the minds of seekers to experience these higher joys, which is an obstacle to God-realisation or Anubhuti. A seeker after Truth has to go beyond these seven worlds also, as they too are within the domain of Maya. God or Brahman is Absolute Bliss, which is the Goal of a spiritual aspirant. He has, therefore, to get freed from the three Eshanas in order that he might not be tempted by the joys of the superior births in the higher realms. Hence the prayer for a total freedom from the three Eshanas!

The Maya, inseparable from which are the three Eshanas, referred to in this verse denotes its causal condition, for it is the cause of 'seven births'. This causal condition is to be differentiated from the '*Jaganmaya*' constituted of 'home, wealth and women' (*Ahamaadai Madan-thaiyar*) referred to in verse 5, which is its gross condition, as also from the '*Illeyenum Mayai*' (verse 29) and the "*Padu Mayai*" (verse 31) which are its subtle conditions. In the beginning of Sadhana, Maya troubles the seeker in the form of gross, individual objects,—as the many things external to him. This was the condition portrayed in verse 5, where the Sadhaka is in the beginning stages of his journey to the Immortal. But, after due initiation by the Guru into the techniques of meditation and after having a glimpse of Cosmic Consciousness, Maya becomes an indescribable one, "*Illeyenum Mayai*",—Maya which is said

to be non-existent. Though it is experienced as the visible world, it is nullified in the cosmic awareness; and yet one has to live in and experience it, though with a transformed vision, which gives him the conviction that it is, after all, perishable,—‘Padu Mayai’. Then, it is not the individual objects outside but the world as such that is Maya. By world, one’s own body is included which is also nullified in meditation, though experienced at other times. But in this verse, Maya extends to the whole of creation, i.e., the seven (great or superior) births,—either the seven kinds of birth into which are distributed the 84 lakh Yonis, or the seven higher realms; both of which are only heard of but not visible,—yet it is located in the heart as the Eshanas or basic cravings. How strange is this Maya! In its grossest form, it is regarded as the isolated objects and also external to the seeker,—limited and away. In its subtle form, from individual objects it extends to the world on the one side, while from external objects it reaches his own body on the other,—more extensive and closer. In its causal condition, from the objects and the world it extends to the whole of creation on the one side, while it recedes within the seeker himself and lodges itself as the Eshanas in his heart,—most extensive and closest. This is the mystery of Maya.

Hence, though rejection of external objects (gross condition) is good, this alone will not do. Though negation of the world and body in meditation is higher (subtle condition), that is also not enough. The seven great births have to cease by the destruction of the heart’s cravings (causal state), if liberation is to be attained. How pithily does Arunagiri convey subtle secrets!

This causal condition of Maya in which the three Eshanas are one with it, referred to in this verse, may be said to be the ‘Mahamaya’, which the Lord alone is capable of destroying, mentioned in the earlier part of verse 5. And the soul acutely longs for the grace of that Lord for the removal of the Mahamaya, or the three Eshanas.

(Family and home have been renounced. Sannyasa has been taken. Mahavakya Upadesa has been obtained (verse-37). Only the last vesture of Maya in its causal form, i.e., the condition where the three Eshanas are inseparable from it, remains to be rent asunder. The Sadhaka is now pining to get rid of this also. This extreme longing to be freed from Samsara is a precursor to the final stroke of Sadhana which he is to undertake (as would be seen in the next verse), before which he offers an invoking prayer to the Lord to take him into his possession, even as He embraced Valli, accepted her and made her His own.)]

VERSE—40

Vinaiyoda Vidum KathirVel Maraven
Manaiyodu Thiyangi Mayangidavo
Sunaiyodu Aruvith Thuraiyodu Pasum
Thinaiyodu Ithanodu Thirindhavane

*Karma-dispelling Luminous-Vel, I shall not forget;
Perplexed and deluded will I be, by this life transient?
The spring, the waterfall and the fields of millet,—
O Lord Who wandered amongst these, as also the watch-shed?*

“O Lord, Who (in search of Valli) wandered about the (mountain) spring, the banks of the waterfall, the millet-field and the watch-shed! I shall not forget the Luminous-Vel that dispels (the darkness of) Karmas. Will I be perplexed and deluded by this Samsaric life? (No, it cannot be!)”

EXPLANATION

This is a unique verse which reveals the true significance and the real glory of the *Vel*. The *Vel* is not merely the Divine Weapon of Lord Skanda, as is usually conceived of and referred to, but is also the supreme Object of meditation itself, i.e., it is identical with the Absolute. In the case of advanced Sadhakas this fact is known, says Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, in his work *Lord Shanmukha and His Worship*: “As the aspirant advances in the practice (of Meditation), he can gradually dispense with all the paraphernalia and concentrate upon the *Vel* (Spear) alone. This Spear is the Real *Svarupa* of Lord Subrahmanya. It represents Consciousness. When all the rest has vanished, this alone remains behind. . . . One who meditates on this (*Vel*) as Consciousness surely attains the Supreme Brahman which is Satchidananda.”

In the previous verse, the soul's longing for freedom from the three *Eshanas* was echoed. Now, Arunagiri shows the way to achieve it. It is to constantly think of or meditate upon the *Vel*. What is the *Vel* and what is its power? Just as the sun dispels darkness without any effort, by its mere shining; the *Vel* by its very nature, drives off or destroys Karmas. Significantly, Arunagiri calls the *Vel*, in this verse, as '*Kadir-Vel*',—the *Vel* which is of the form of luminous Light—which is otherwise known as *Jnana-Vel*, or Wisdom-*Vel*.

I shall not forget the luminous *Vel* that dispels Karmas, says Arunagiri. The *Vel* symbolises Pure Consciousness, which is the Self or Brahman. Non-forgetfulness of the *Vel*, therefore, means an effort at establishment in the awareness of the Self, which naturally will dispel all Karmas. Karmas, virtuous or otherwise, are due to desires. Prompted by desires, man performs Karmas. Why does one engage oneself in activity of any kind? It is desire that goads one to activity, to get something, to achieve something that is unachieved. Why is there desire? Because of ignorance of the real nature of things, as also of one's own essential nature. To think that one is the body or mind, and to strive to possess things and enjoy them for getting happiness, is due to ignorance of one's essential nature, or the Self. The Self, which one really is, is Immortal and Eternal, Bliss and Peace, Wisdom and Infinite Power. Not to forget this, i.e., to be rooted in this awareness, will remove ignorance. This Self is the *Vel* that can destroy ignorance, as the sun removes darkness. When ignorance is thus removed by an awareness of the Self or *Vel*, desires cease and with them Karmas, too. Ignorance is not a positive or real thing, even as darkness is not; it is only the absence of Wisdom, just as darkness is only the absence of light. When light comes, darkness vanishes automatically and no effort is necessary to remove it. So also when Wisdom dawns, when a perpetual awareness of the Self is maintained, ignorance vanishes. So, to break the chain of Karma which is the effect of desire and ignorance (*Avidya*, *Kama* and *Karma*, the three knots of the

heart that bind the soul to Samsara or phenomenal existence), non-forgetfulness of the *Vel* or an awareness of one's essential nature is the only means. When the thinking principle in man, which ultimately is Consciousness itself, thinks of the *Vel* or Consciousness, i.e. Itself, it is severed from its connections with the mind and senses, and at once these cease functioning, as a huge machine comes to a standstill when the current is withdrawn from it. Thus the consciousness resting in Consciousness immediately puts an end to Karmas. Arunagiri, therefore, says, "Never shall I forget the *Light-Vel* which drives off Karmas. Therefore, no more shall I be subject to Samsara." Ceaseless remembrance of the *Vel*, or trying to be rooted in the awareness of the Self, frees one from the shackles of Karma and liberates one from the effect of Samsara. Here the meditation reaches its zenith and culminating point, where the meditation is on the Absolute or Satchidananda, as pure Consciousness,—the *Vel*.

Now, what happens to the phenomenal life when one thus tries to be rooted in the awareness of the Omnipresence of the Self or in the ceaseless remembrance of the *Vel*? The world will be there, but not as before. To such a one the world may appear to be there, and he may also appear to be subject to the vicissitudes of life. But, to him, it is all a mere joke, a play. Even as Maya is not a binding factor to the Lord, so becomes Samsara to him. Nothing affects him any more. He may carry on his usual activities as before, apparently in the same manner; but, because of this peculiar awareness, he carries on those activities without being affected by them, without delusion or agitation, as he is ever conscious of the unchanging Reality in which he is trying to be rooted. How beautifully does Arunagiri bring out this fact in this verse, when he says that Lord Skanda went in search of Valli to the millet-field, etc? Valli used to stand on a raised platform in the midst of the millet-fields and drive off the birds that came to peck the corn. Sometimes she would go to the nearby mountain-spring to drink water, or to the waterfall for a bath. But all this she did during the day, and well before sunset she would return to her

home in the adjoining village. The Lord knew all this. But, says Arunagiri, He would still go to those places in search of her in the evening, after she had left for her home, and search for her in those places. Knowingly why did the Lord do so? It was a pleasure for Him, a *Lila*, an act of grace! Not only that; He would not be disappointed for not meeting her, because even before leaving for those places He knew that she would not be there; on the other hand, it was a joy to search for her. The outward act of the Lord in searching for Valli was like that of any other lover for his beloved, but the mental attitude was quite different, which makes all the difference. Even so, one who is trying to be fixed in the awareness of the Omnipresence of the Lord, does all actions as anyone else would do and he may appear to be suffering and tied down to Samsara, but it is all meaningless for him. He knows that the Self is the sole Reality and the world is essenceless. Nothing shakes him any more, even as the Lord was not disappointed.

But what about an ordinary worldling who would fail to see his beloved? How much would he be agitated and deluded? Life itself would seem to lose all meaning for him. Arunagiri may also be said to indirectly hint at the sufferings undergone by the poor worldlings who are so much attached to women. They run about here and there in search of their beloveds, to even the least possible places of their visit, with the vain hope of having a glimpse of them. The miserable plight of the worldlings who are still in the bonds of Karmas and are tossed about by women, and the ever-free state of those who are rooted in God-consciousness and to whom everything is a mere play, are both very beautifully depicted by Arunagiri in one stroke. "O Lord, to Whom all this phenomenal life is a *Lila* or divine sport! Never shall I forget the *Wisdom-Vel*. No more can Karmas touch me. Samsara can have no meaning to me any more. I try to rest in my own Self," rejoices the Saint.

'*Manai*' means house, i.e., a place of residence. People, as bodies, live in houses. A house has various sections, such

as the pial in the front portion, the drawing room, the bedroom, the kitchen, the dining hall, the back-yard, the garden with trees and well, etc., etc.,—all within a big compound wall. In whichever portion of the house one might be, one is still within the boundaries of the house. This is so far as the body is concerned. But, for the soul or Jiva, the '*Manai*' or house is the entire domain of Maya which, as seen in the previous verse, comprises the seven great births, especially the seven superior realms of experience. In meditation, the Jiva might have experience of the different realms. In whichever realm the soul might be, it is still within the limits of Maya. The whole of creation projected by Maya is the '*Manai*' or place of residence for the soul, which it has to overstep in order to attain God. This is done by meditation on the *Vel* or Self. When the soul is in a state of attunement with the *Vel-Consciousness* or Brahman, Maya is at once transcended, not by a movement in space but by losing itself *here and now* in the Brahman-Awareness.

In this verse, the soul is not fully established in Brahman-Consciousness, but is trying to fix itself in It by a ceaseless meditation. Even this gives it the conviction that it will go beyond the limits of Maya and so it exclaims, "Am I to be caught up or deluded by the different realms of Maya (i.e., '*Manai*'), when my meditation on Brahman is unremitting? No, phenomenality cannot affect me."

This verse seems also to have an implied prayer to the Lord to come and confer His blessings. Valli was single-mindedly devoted to the Lord, but she had to live in the midst of her parents and relatives ('*Manai*', i.e., house). When her devotion was ripe and the time to bless her came, the Lord Himself went in search of her and accepted her. So Arunagiri seems to remind the Lord of this and invoke His grace, saying, "I am uninterruptedly meditating on the *Vel*; however, I am still caught up in this phenomenal life ('*Manai*'), even as Valli was. O Lord, as You went of Your own accord to Valli and accepted her, kindly condescend to

come and bless me, i.e., to reveal Yourself to me, so that I might be freed from phenomenality."

Now, from this verse onwards, Arunagiri takes us to the climax of his God-Experience, which he gives in verse 43. As we are drawing near it, the tempo also rises. Verses 40, 41 and 42 are exceptionally rare ones, very bold affirmations, and give intimate glimpses of the state of mind just preceding that Grand Experience.

The *Vel* is mysteriously powerful. He who remembers the *Vel* is freed from Karmas, is victorious in all his undertakings, and he shines with Wisdom. The *Vel* is strength. The *Vel* is power. The *Vel* is the support. The *Vel* is Wisdom. The *Vel* is the Self. The *Vel* is the Absolute, Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, *Satchidananda*; and the *Vel* and the wielder of the *Vel* (Lord Skanda) are One.

[To transcend the Maya from which are inseparable the three *Eshanas*, the Sadhaka now undertakes the practice of unceasing meditation on the *Vel*, the Self or pure Consciousness; which is the putting into practice of the "*Aham Brahma Asmi*" Upadesa obtained at the time of initiation into Sannyasa (verse 37). As Lord Buddha sat under the Bodhi tree determined not to get up until Enlightenment came or the body melted and perished, the Sadhaka is now determined to attain the Experience Divine. This gives him supreme confidence that Samsara, or the play of Maya, cannot affect him. Phenomenal life looks like a dream from the point of view of the *Vel*-Consciousness or Atman-Consciousness and it appears as a mere play for him, even as it was a *Lila* for the Lord to search for Valli in the millet-field and other places.]

VERSE—41

Saagaa Thenaiye Saranangalile
Kaakaa Namanaar Kalagam Seyunaal
Vaagaa Murugaa Mayil Vaaganane
Yogaa Sivajnana Upadhesikane

*Save me from transmigration and, under Your Foot Lotuses,
Protect, protect, when the soul Yama separates,
O Victory-garlanded! O Muruga! O Peacock-rider!
O Lord of Yoga! O Guru Supreme, the Siva-Jnana Bestower!*

“O Lord, wearing beautiful victory-garlands! O Lord Muruga! O Peacock-rider! O Lord of Yoga! O Lord (the Supreme Guru) who grants Siva-Jnana (Atma-Jnana or Brahma-Jnana)! At the time (of death) when Yama would play his mischief (of separating the soul from the body by throwing his noose), allowing me not to die (at his hands), protect me, O Lord, protect me under Thine Divine Feet.”

EXPLANATION

Life is a mystery and everything with it is uncertain. Yet, one thing is most certain and that is death. Death is the separation of the soul (subtle and causal bodies) from the physical body on the exhaustion of the Prarabdha Karmas which projected it. The physical body is, therefore, bound to disintegrate one day or the other and go to its fundamental elements; Yama or the Lord of death is said to throw his noose on the Jiva and separate it from the physical body, which act causes physical suffering and mental disturbance. The Jiva then cannot think of God. As the last thought determines the nature of one's next birth, God-thought has to be maintained at the time of death if the soul is to be saved from rebirth and rest in the Feet of the Lord, i.e., attain Liberation or *Mukti*. But the last thought can-

not be expected to be something other than what one has been entertaining throughout one's life, or at least the greater part of it. Hence we have to create a strong habit of remembering God always, if we are to rest under His Feet when Yama would do his work.

As life is fickle and one may die at any moment, to think of remembering God only at the time of death would be unwise. Sudden and instantaneous deaths of heart-failure, accidents, etc., are not uncommon. Where is the guarantee that we shall live tomorrow, nay, the next moment? Hence it is the advice of all men of wisdom to regard every moment as the last moment and remember God, so that whenever death might occur God-thought will be steady and the soul could merge in God, avoiding rebirth. Not only this, we have freedom of thought now; we can exercise our will and think of God. But, at the last moment, when Yama would throw his noose and separate the Jiva from the body, one's mind will get confounded and the nervous system agitated due to the peculiar conditions that would supervene then. Man will have no freedom of thought and action; and even if he wishes to remember God; it would be next to impossibility. Therefore, if we are not going to remember God now when we have got a little freedom, are we going to think of Him when we would be helpless? Hence the remembrance of the Lord should be so much habituated by practice from now itself as to seep into the very subconscious and unconscious levels of one's being, which will enable one retain God-thought even at that critical juncture when conscious thinking may not be possible. Arunagiri thus impresses upon us the need to think of God and be in a prayerful and meditative mood always, and not be foolish enough as to think of remembering God at the last moment; because neither the time of death is known to us nor have we the freedom of thought at that time. "Beware! Death is ever at your elbows. Remember God from now on. Pray to Him constantly. Dwell upon His Divine form and attributes. Meditate upon Him. Attain God-experience before the body falls. Give no chance to Yama to take possession

of the soul. The Lord Who rides on the Peacock is the Lord of Yoga, is the Guru Supreme. Realise Him, merge in Him and rest in Him, so that when Yama comes (that is, when the death of the body takes place), the soul need not die to be reborn, but may rest in the Feet of the Lord, the Eternal Abode of Bliss," is Arunagiri's advice.

Arunagiri prays: "O Lord, I am ever thinking of You, or the *Vel*. Therefore rest my soul in Your Feet, under Your care, when it is separated by Yama (on the exhaustion of the Prarabdha Karmas) from this body." Though the verse appears to be a prayer for protection from Yama's clutches, it has a deeper significance and seems to imply a longing for the attainment of liberation while yet in the body.

We have to make a distinction between death of the body and death of the soul. The death of the body is unavoidable; it is a natural process, a *Dharma* of the body which has to disintegrate when the force that gave a momentum to it ceases. The death of the soul means transmigration. What is reborn is not the body but the soul. Since 'rebirth' presupposes death, and because rebirth is for the soul and not the body, the soul that has to be reborn is said to die. Hence, by death of the soul, what is meant is transmigration. While the death of the body cannot be avoided, the soul's death, i.e., transmigration, can be. This freedom from transmigration is what Arunagiri means by '*Saagaadhu*'; and the natural process of the body's death, which cannot be avoided, by '*Namanaar Kalagam*'.

When the body dies, if the soul has good or bad Karmas to be worked out by it, Yama takes possession of it, passes judgment according to its deeds and involves it into further births, high or low. This transmigratory process can be avoided if the soul devotes itself to God, meditates on Him and attains Mukti. This is to rest in the Lord's Feet, for which is the prayer in this verse. If God-Consciousness is maintained, if the Jiva attains freedom from Karmas by Atma-Jnana i.e., establishment in the Atman or *Vel*-Consciousness, at the time of the body's death, it will not be sub-

ject to transmigration. This freedom can be attained even while living in this body, which is called Jivanmukti.

The attainment of Freedom, or Lord's Feet, or Mukti, is not necessarily an after-death achievement but a possibility and an actual experience here and now. It is not of much consequence in what condition the body is at the time of death—whether it is healthy, diseased, young, old, worshipped, ignored, etc.,—in determining the liberation of the soul; what really matters is the state of consciousness of the Jiva. Because, liberation is not of or for the body, but the soul. The consciousness it is that is either bound or liberated. The state of consciousness maintained before and at the time of the death of the body determines its condition after death also. Hence the Jiva cannot be said to attain after death, a state totally unknown and unconnected to what it was just before death. What it was before, it is also after death. This explains the possibility of Jivanmukti. Hence when Arunagiri prays for the Lord's protection of the Jiva under His Feet *at the time when Yama plays his mischief*, i.e., death of the body, it means the soul's longing for freedom while yet alive, i.e., Jivanmukti state,—to grant God-Consciousness. Therefore, 'at the time of Yama's mischief' refers to 'physical death'; while 'Saagaadhu' or 'without dying', which means 'not to be re-born', refers to the soul's liberation from (death) transmigration.

"At that time when Yama plays his mischief, protect me, protect me under Thine Feet," prays Arunagiri. Why does he say 'Kaa', 'Kaa'—protect me, protect me,—twice? It cannot be for immediate protection from Yama, because the danger is not close at hand; it is far off which is clear from the words '*Kalagam Seyum Naal*'—'at that time'. Had Yama already come and is trying to take the soul, and had the Lord not come to its help so far, this call would have been appropriate. But it is not so. Again, this cannot be a prayer to the Lord to hurry up *at that time*, because it is meaningless; for, if there is time for Yama to come, the Lord has also enough time to come. The Lord need not be hurried now itself.

Moreover the Lord is all-knowing, all-powerful and Omnipresent. Hence '*Kaa*', '*Kaa*' indicates the longing of the soul for immediate *liberation*, and *not protection* from Yama. We have to carefully note that the protection sought for is *not from Yama* but *in the Lord's Feet*. Protection in the Feet means liberation. And '*Kaa*', '*Kaa*' is used to indicate immediacy in liberation, i.e., liberation *here and now*, and not somewhere and at some time.

This *now* and *here* are mysterious factors. They mean the transcendence of time and space. What is this '*now*'? Every moment is *a now*, at that time. What we call '*the past*' *was then a now*; '*the present*' is now *a now*; and '*the future*' *will then be a now*. The past, present and future are, therefore, a mere play of *the now*, or *Eternity*. In Eternity, there is no past, present and future; it always is *a now*. Similarly, in Infinity there is no here, there, etc.; it always is *a here*. So Arunagiri prays, "Under Thine Feet protect me (here) ('*Kaa*') and protect me (now) ('*Kaa*'). Hence it is clearly a prayer or longing for Jivanmukti, or Liberation *here and now*. A better translation of the first two lines of the verse would, therefore, be, "Protect me (here) and protect me (now) under Thine Foot Lotuses, i.e., grant me Jivanmukti, in order that, at the time when Yama makes his mischief, the soul need not die (i.e., pass into his hands,—avoid rebirth)."

It is important and of interest to note that the prayer in this verse is not for freedom from physical death, nor even fear of it, as in verse 10. There the Sadhaka was afraid of death and prayed for the intervention of the Lord *if* Yama comes on his black buffalo. He was afraid of death, or Yama, because of two reasons: (1) In those initial stages of Sadhana, his understanding was not mature enough, and consequently the identification with the body was so much that the death of the body meant the death of the soul or personality itself, and so it was unthinkable and fearful. (2) Secondly, he did not want the death of the body to come before the Goal is attained, because life's purpose would not

then be fulfilled, and great would be his loss. But now, in this verse or state of attainment in Sadhana, he is not afraid of the physical death for, again, two contrary reasons: (1) His understanding is different now, which is also correct. He now knows that the death of the body cannot be avoided (it being a natural process), nor is it to be avoided and feared, because physical death has nothing to do with the soul's attainment. (2) Secondly, he is now confident that he is getting established in the *Vel-Consciousness* or *God-Consciousness* (verse 40) and that physical death has no relevance to the soul's liberation.

There is a subtle but vast distinction between the death of the body and the liberation or bondage of the soul. One has nothing to do, as it were, with the other. Hence when great souls or *Mahapurushas* pass away, we do not say that they died but say, "They have become Immortal or attained Mahasamadhi," though what happens to their bodies is just the same as to any ordinary man as well.

Hence here, the prayer to the Lord is not for saving him from physical death or Yama's mischief as in verse 10, but for resting of the Jiva-consciousness in the Lord's Feet or God-Consciousness; again the prayer in verse 10 was not for liberation of the soul as here, but only for intervention of the Lord *if* Yama comes.

The points of contrast between the two verses may be summed up as follows:

- (1) '*At the time when* Yama plays his mischief'—it means Yama *shall* do it. There is no escape from it, nor is the prayer intended to avoid it or be saved from it. But in verse 10, fear of Yama or death is echoed when he says, "If Yama comes, O Lord, come and intervene (i.e., protect me from him)."
- (2) 'Protect me under Your Feet so that I may not die'—'Soul's Mukti is prayed for, which has nothing to do with Yama's mischief. (But in verse 10, there is no such explicit prayer for the soul's liberation, unless we imply it.)

- (3) Because soul's liberation is prayed for here, the Lord is also addressed accordingly, i.e., as the giver of Siva-Jnana or Atma-Jnana as also the Lord (or giver) of Yoga. In verse 10, because protection from physical death was only prayed for, the Lord was also addressed accordingly, i.e., as the destroyer of Surapadma who was the enemy of Indra who killed the Asura Vala. 'Enemy' and 'killing' seem to suggest that Yama is regarded as 'enemy' who is to be 'killed'.

In the previous verse Arunagiri said that he will never forget the Wisdom-*Vel*, and so he is not affected by Karmas and that Samsara becomes a play,—the body which is due to the impetus of the Prarabdha Karmas carries on its activities undeluded as long as the momentum lasts. What should happen when the body falls, on the exhaustion of the Prarabdha, that is, when Yama separates the soul from the body, he reveals in this verse. "When Yama does his duty of separating the soul from the body (that is, when the present body dies), O Lord of Yoga and Jnana-Guru, allowing not the soul to die at Yama's hands (i.e., be subject to transmigration), give me permanent shelter under Thine Lotus Feet, i.e., grant me Mukti." An effort at establishment in the awareness of the Self (as stated in the previous verse) gives one the needed strength to face death undisturbed, because the soul need go nowhere but merge in the Absolute or the Lord, then and there.

[That determined effort at establishment in the *Vel*-Consciousness or *Aham Brahma Asmi* (verse 40), has removed the fear of death and the Sadhaka now laughs, as it were, at death, because he knows that Yama will merely do his duty of separating the soul from the body, i.e., the body will disintegrate on exhaustion of the Prarabdha Karmas, which is but a natural process.

The purpose of '*Aham Brahma Asmi*' meditation is to attain God here itself. The aspirant who has taken to an uninterrupted thinking of the *Vel*, or meditation of '*Aham Brahma Asmi*' (verse 40), therefore, not only continues

that meditation, but also intensely longs for immediate protection under the Lord's Feet, i.e., establishment in that awareness, which is liberation *here and now*,—Jivanmukti,—and thereby be freed from transmigration forever.

The Lord's Feet and the *Vel-Consciousness* mean one and the same thing. The Feet are not a limited object but the Object of attainment, even as the *Vel* is, and represent *Paramapada* or the Supreme Abode of Omnipresence (as we shall see in verse 44). Hence to grant (protection under) the Feet or *Vel-Consciousness* means liberation or Jivanmukti. While the Feet are regarded as visible outside and placed on one's head, the *Vel* represents an inner state of Consciousness and is revealed within, in the aspirant's heart. Thus, while the one is an external act, the other is an inner revelation, but both denoting the same thing. The prayer of this verse to grant (protection under) the Feet is, therefore, a prayer to reveal the *Vel-Consciousness*, to establish in which was the Sadhaka's unremitting effort in the previous verse; and the revelation of the *Vel-Consciousness*, in the next verse, is at once the consummation of that effort as also the fulfilment of this prayer.

It is body-consciousness or limited consciousness that causes fear of physical death. When protection under the Feet is granted or Universal Consciousness supervenes, for which he now prays, fear of physical death is overcome, and transmigration also ceases, because there is then no question of the soul's going anywhere.]

VERSE—42

**Kuriyaik Kuriyaadhu Kuritthu Ariyum
Neriyait Thani Velai Nigazht Thidalum
Serivattru Ulagodu Uraisinthaiyum Attru
Arivattru Ariyaamaiyum Attradhuve**

[illegible]

“No sooner is the *Vel* Incomparable, (or) that Supreme State (*Mukti*) of knowing (realising) the Object (of meditation) by thinking without thinking, granted (to me), than all (my) relations with the world ceased, speech and mind also ceased, intellect ceased and ignorance too ceased!”

EXPLANATION

The "*Kuri*" or *Lakshya* or the Supreme Object of attainment is the Lord. It is Brahman or the Absolute. It is *Satchidananda*—Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute. It is the Self or the *Vel*, as seen in verse 40. The Goal is attained when the Lord, out of His Grace, chooses to bless us and reveals Himself as the Incomparable *Vel*, as the Self, as Superconsciousness. This is *Samadhi*, the culmination of *Dhyana* or meditation, wherein the knower, the known and the process of knowing become one, and Self-Consciousness supervenes. This is *Vel-Consciousness*, or "the state of knowing the Object by 'thinking without thinking.'"

There are two kinds of knowledge: Knowledge by *process* and Knowledge by *being*; sensory knowledge and Pure self-consciousness (Intuition); mediate knowledge and Immediate or non-mediate knowledge.

Knowledge obtained through perception, sensation, etc., i.e., obtained through the operation of the senses, mind and intellect, is sensory knowledge. This knowledge comes by a process of knowing, in which the intellect, mind and senses act as instruments or media to the knowing principle which is the Self or Consciousness. When the Consciousness which is universal gets associated, as it were, with these instruments, it gets involved in them and is limited to them. Then it begins to see things other than itself and knows them in a process. When the consciousness, thus limited, objectifies itself through the individual mind, thinking takes place. When it further moves out and activates the senses and the organs (body), which are the means of contact, it establishes a relation with the world, through speech and action. Thus, the consciousness moves out and has knowledge of the world outside through the mind and senses, and establishes a contact with it through the body. This is the kind of knowledge that is known to us. The highest type of knowledge in this kind is intellectual knowledge, which is finally based on the report of the senses of the outside world. This is *objectified knowledge*; knowing by thinking; mediate knowledge.

But, there is another kind of knowledge, a novel kind altogether. It is known as Self-Consciousness or Intuition, which supervenes in the state of *Samadhi* or Realisation. This is *non-objectified* awareness. This is the *Vel-Consciousness*, or *knowing the Object by 'thinking without thinking'*, says Arunagiri.

These expressions carry mystic meanings, far beyond our intellectual grasp. Thinking without thinking, sleepless sleep, *Vel-Consciousness*, etc., are very mystic. They all connote the state of *Samadhi* or *Mukti*, for which Arunagiri uses the term '*Neri*'. Though it is impossible to explain what this state of Self-Consciousness is, because it is an *Experience*, it can be made clear by proceeding on the lines of a simple analogy of our day-to-day experience.

As we know, there is a difference between our knowing

the existence of an object and our own existence (as a bodily entity). How do we know that an object exists? By the process of perception and thinking, because the object known and the knowing subject (we) are not the same, i.e., they are two different entities standing apart. In other words, the existence of the object is separated for our consciousness of it. But, how do we know that we exist? Not by perception, not by thinking; we need not see ourselves to know that we exist, nor do we need to think or ratiocinate. We know ourselves by a kind of intuition, or self-consciousness! What is this? The consciousness or the knowing principle in us gets so much identified with the body that it regards itself as the body and feels 'I am', in the sense 'I am the body'. Here, for all practical purposes 'I' means the body. In the perception of objects, the consciousness objectifies itself further, i.e., goes outside the body, and knows them. In our knowing of ourselves, the consciousness which has thus objectified itself does nothing but to return to itself (i.e., the body) and *be* itself, and know itself as such, as 'I am', without involving perception or thinking. The consciousness coming back to itself, being itself and knowing itself—this is intuition or self-consciousness—this is knowing by 'thinking without thinking'. This is *knowing by being*, wherein both knowing and being are one, i.e., being itself is knowing. This, of course, is the crudest form of intuition or self-consciousness because, here, there are still two things—the inert body and the knowing consciousness—which are superimposed on each other. The Jiva-consciousness to regard itself as the body is the lowest degree of self-consciousness and there are higher degrees of self-consciousness—the consciousness identified with the mind, with the intellect, and with the ego or Avidya,—when it feels, respectively, 'I am happy, I am dejected'; 'I know, I am baffled'; and 'I exist or I am' with the feeling that it (the Jiva-consciousness) has an independent existence of its own isolated from the cosmic existence of Isvara. This *Jivatva* or pure Jiva-consciousness is the highest degree of self-consciousness of the Jiva, wherein the universal conscious-

ness gets reflected in the Avidya or individuality, and forgetting its universal nature asserts its limited existence as 'I am.' Thus, the feeling 'I am body, I am mind, etc.,' are the different degrees of self-consciousness of the Jiva-consciousness. But in Self-Consciousness (Intuition) proper, there is a return of this identified or Jiva-consciousness to its Source,—the universal condition of Isvaratva,—and Consciousness, bereft of any associations, knows Itself by being Itself. It is difficult to say what knows what, which is the knower and which is the known, because the universal is both the subject and the object, the knower and the known. It is the universal knowing itself. *Something is*, and That Knows itself as 'I am'—*Ahamasmi*. It is Self-Consciousness of Universal Being—It is Being-Consciousness.

The return of the objectified Jiva-consciousness to itself is, in a limited sense, self-consciousness. And the return of the pure Jiva-consciousness to Isvara or God is real Self-Consciousness,—in both the cases there is no extroverted knowing, but *Knowing by Being*.

The Jiva is a mysterious thing. It is Isvara itself falsely identifying itself with the different *Upadhis* or limiting factors. The peculiarity of the Jiva-consciousness is that it feels itself to be that with which it is, for the time being, identified. Hence when the Jiva discovers itself to be different from the sheaths, with which it identified itself, it realises itself to be Isvara; because it is Isvara that goes by the name of Jiva when limited to *Upadhis*. The Skanda-upanishad says: "Jiva is Siva; Siva is Jiva. Jiva is verily Siva alone! So long as the husk encases it, the grain is known as paddy; with the disappearance of the husk, it is called rice. Similarly, when in bondage, it is Jiva; and when Karma is destroyed, it is Sadasiva. Bound by *Paasa*, it is Jiva; freed from *Paasa*, it is Sādasiva."

Thus when the meditative principle or Jiva-consciousness, which is ultimately universal awareness, frees itself from its *Upadhis*, through any process of meditation, Self-Consciousness ensues as 'I am'—*Ahamasmi*. In Self-Cons-

ciousness, *being is knowing*; *Sat* is *Chit*, which was referred to as 'Knowledge called Serenity' (*Poraiyaam Arivu*), in verse 37, which the *Sadhaka* was instructed to attain by meditation on '*Aham Brahma Asmi* [(*Naan*) *Iraiyan Parivaaram*], and with which to destroy the ego to its root (i.e., *Avidya*), which is now categorically declared to be destroyed in this verse (*Ariyaamai Attradhu*).

How this state of *Samadhi* supervenes is indeed a wonder. By a mysterious combination of *Purva Punya* (accumulated past merits), one's *Sadhana-sakti* (power of spiritual practice), *Guru's* power of initiation (*Saktipata*) and *Isvara Kripa* (God's grace) the *Vel* or Super-Consciousness reveals Itself. This is the state of *Turiya*, i.e., Consciousness in Its transcendental state bereft of its relation with the five *Kosas* or sheaths, which is so precisely conveyed in the verse. "No sooner *Mukti*, the *Vel* Incomparable, is granted than the relations with the world ceased, speech ceased, mind ceased, intellect ceased and ignorance too ceased". We need not go into much details to explain this. It is evident that when Self-Consciousness supervenes, 'other-consciousness' ceases and with it all processes cease. We have, however, to note that *Arunagiri* employs specific words to denote the cessation of the five sheaths or *Kosas*.

Relations with the world are established by the body (the organs of action) which is the *Annamaya Kosa*. Speech, which is due to the operation of the *Prana*, represents the *Pranamaya Kosa*. Mind is *Manomaya Kosa*. Intellect is *Vijnanamaya Kosa*. Ignorance is *Avidya* and represents the *Anandamaya Kosa*. Thus all the five *Kosas* cease functioning when the *Jiva* attains Liberation. This is also the state of Supreme *Mouna* or Silence.

In verse 40 *Arunagiri* said that an effort at a perpetual establishment in the awareness of the Self, i.e., non-forgetfulness of the *Vel*, removes delusion, and that with that awareness one carries on all the activities as a mere play, undeluded. But yet there is the activity of the senses, mind, intellect and ego in that state, though it be

undeluded; because it is Jiva that is trying to establish itself in God, i.e., we thinking of the *Vel*. But when, as in this verse, the *Vel*, is revealed, i.e., when the Jiva is established in God, there is a total cessation of all human faculties, including the ego and Avidya. The real and full glory of the *Vel* is thus explicitly revealed in this verse, as the very state of *Mukti*. *Vel-Consciousness* is *Self-Consciousness*; the *Vel* is the *Self*.

This is one of the most intriguing but profound verses in this treatise. Let us, therefore, see some interesting points in it.

There is thinking (*Kurittthal*). There is thinking and knowing, i.e., knowing by thinking (*Kurittthu Aridhal*). This is sensory, or mediate or objectified knowledge.

There is 'thinking without thinking' or thinkingless thinking (*Kuriyaadhu Kurittthal*), which is meditation or *Dhyana*. There is 'thinking without thinking, and knowing the Object' (*Kuriyaadhu Kurittthu Aridhal*), which is *Samadhi* or *Self-Consciousness*.

What sensory knowledge is, we have seen earlier. In meditation, a total reversal of the whole process of sensory knowing takes place. The consciousness which has objectified itself through the intellect, mind, senses and body, traces its steps back, which process is meditation. Instead of thinking outwardly, it starts thinking inwardly. Instead of thinking in terms of objects which are limited and outside, it starts thinking of God, the Self, which is universal and so 'within'. Thus, sensory knowledge is an outward process, externalisation of consciousness; meditation is an inward process, universalisation of consciousness. Yet it is a process, and even in meditation the consciousness is still objectified, because though it is tracing its steps back, it is still away from its source or centre. Even Jiva-consciousness is objectified, not to speak of object-consciousness.

Thus, *Dhyana* or meditation is also a process, though inward; there is an effort to know the Object of meditation which is not yet known. But *Samadhi* or *Self-consciousness*

is a *state*; the Object is known, and there is, therefore, a cessation of all effort or process. Hence, the Experience of the state of Samadhi or Realisation is the same, irrespective of the difference in the methods (processes) of meditation resorted to, which is the case even in ordinary experiences. The experience of deep sleep is the same with all, though the methods of going to sleep may differ.

'Thinking without thinking' may, therefore, be interpreted differently, though what is attained, or the *Experience*, would be the same, ultimately.

(1) *Thinking of God, without thinking of anything else:*

This is the method of *Bhakti*, of exclusive devotion to God, i.e., God-thought to the exclusion of everything else. This is what the Bhagavadgita refers to as '*Ananya Chintan*'. Thought of God, without a second to it, is therefore 'thinking without thinking'. But when this process is carried on, God-thought becomes so deep that the thinking principle loses itself in God, so that it ceases to exist and God (Pure Consciousness) alone remains; just as when a river rushes into the ocean, the ocean alone is, without any trace of the river.

(2) *Thinking of the Universal Reality behind the object of meditation, without thinking of its name and form:*

When a child sees a dog carved out of stone, it sees only a dog and no stone; it has not got that matured understanding to perceive the stone behind it. It sees only the form and not the essence or substance. But if we see it, we know it as a stone, though we also see the dog-form. We too see the dog, but we go beyond the name and form and behold the substance and know it as a piece of stone. It is not that we do not see the form; but we transcend it. Not to see the form but try to perceive the essence is, therefore, 'thinking without thinking'. To transcend *Nama-Rupa* and behold *Satchidananda* is '*thinking* (of the essence) *without thinking* (of the name and form)'. Thus, in meditation on any form of God, we have to see the Universal Reality behind

the deity. When, in this process, the *Nama-rupa* of the object of meditation is transcended, with it the *Nama-rupa* (individuality) of the meditator is also transcended, and the Reality behind both, which is Satchidananda, alone remains and the state of Samadhi or Super-Consciousness supervenes.

(3) *Thinking of God as God thinks, without thinking of Him as man thinks:*

This is to think of the Universal from its own standpoint and not from the standpoint of the particular, and know it. The particular, as the particular, can never know the Universal; it has to become or be the Universal and know it. The Jiva cannot know Isvara or God so long as it is a Jiva. It has to know Isvara by being Isvara.

Here we will have an interesting divergence. In sensory perception and knowing, though we know an object, we have no real knowledge of it. What we know is only the existence of the object. We have no real knowledge of it because we have no power or control over it. That we see an object and know its existence as, for example, a mountain, does not mean we have a control over it, i.e., we have no real knowledge of it, because, it is said, 'knowledge is power'. If sensory knowledge is not power, what is that knowledge which is power? It is self-consciousness, where knowing is being. In knowing an object, we do not become or be that object; hence we have no control over it. But, in our knowing ourselves, as explained earlier, we are ourselves; hence we have control over ourselves, though not in an absolute sense,—more than what we have on the objects known by us. But in Self-Consciousness or Isvara-Consciousness, God knows everything and also has control over everything, because He is everything,—He being Immanent. His power consists in His being everything; His Omnipotence is in His Omnipresence. The point at issue is that one thing cannot know another unless it becomes that thing itself, and then only it really knows; otherwise it is not real knowledge, as in sense-perception and sensory knowledge. Therefore *knowing* implies *being*.

Here the pertinent question, "Can one thing really become another?" may be raised. Indeed one thing cannot really be or become another; but a thing which has imagined itself to be something other than what it really is, can, freed from its false imagination (for which purpose is meditation prescribed and practised), be what it always is (which is Realisation).

Now, how does the Jiva become or be Isvara or God, and know Him? There is an element of God in man. When man sheds his human elements or faculties, the God-element, left to itself, realises Itself as such. So, it is God realising God, not man realising God. How can one thing realise another thing? How can man realise God? Hence it is significantly said as God-realisation, Self-realisation or *Sakshatkara* (one thing realising itself), and not as man-realisation. It is God-Experience, not man-experience.

(4) *Thinking of God as the Subject, without thinking of Him as an object:*

God is *Chit* or Pure Consciousness. There is no other conscious principle than God. Hence He is the Knower or Subject, and He can therefore never become an object of knowledge, or the known. The Knower can never become the known, the Subject never the object. Hence, that which meditates in the Jiva, or the meditative-consciousness, is itself God. It is, therefore, thought thinking itself and knowing itself; it is the Subject knowing Itself.

(5) *Thinking of God (the Object of meditation) in the Pati-Jnana method, without thinking of Him in the Pasu-Jnana and Paasa-Jnana methods:*

This is according to the Saiva Siddhanta philosophy method. *Pati* is God; *Pasu* is the soul or Jiva; and *Paasa* is soul's bondage. The soul's knowledge of the objects of the world, which are the Paasas or factors of bondage, and which are other than itself, through the mind and senses,—the soul's deluded knowledge of things other than itself as itself,—is *Paasa Jnana*. When the soul's understanding ripens, it slowly comes to realise that the objects known,

as also the mind and senses through which they are known, are all *Jada* or insentient, and that it (the soul) is an intelligent principle other than these. At this level, when it knows itself to be the knower of the *Paasas*, it would, under delusion, think itself to be the *Pati*. That knowledge by which the *Pasu* regards itself as *Pati* is *Pasu-Jnana*. The *Pasu* that understands itself to be an intelligent principle, further realises that it itself is not the knowing intelligence, but that there is another Intelligence duly illumined by which it knows. When it dives within to know the source of its knowledge, it gets a knowledge of the *Pati* or God that stands as the immanent Intelligence of its intelligence. This is *Pati-Jnana*.

If the *Pasu* holds on to this *Pati-Jnana* thus understood in a measure, and abstains from the *Paasa-Jnana*, the *Pati* or God will be revealed to that *Pati-Jnana*.

The peculiarity of the soul (*Pasu*) is that it partakes either of the nature of the *Paasa* or *Pati* according to whichever it is united. Hence in meditation on God in the *Pati-Jnana* mode, it becomes one with God, knows God as God knows, and enjoys all the attributes of God.

(6) *Thinking 'I am Brahman', without thinking 'I am body, mind,' etc.*

This is the Vedantic method of *Neti, Neti* (not this, not this) doctrine, and *Abheda Brahma Chintan* with *Aham Brahmasmi Bhavana*. We have seen in the beginning how the consciousness, which is universal in its nature, gets limited to individuality (*Avidya*), and objectifies itself through the intellect and mind, and finally establishes a relation with the world through the senses and the body. The consciousness, in a state of delusion, regards itself as the body, senses, etc. When the Guru gives *Mahavakya Upadesa*, and instructs the disciple to meditate on "*Aham Brahma Asmi*", the consciousness gets awakened to its real nature. Now, the process of meditation starts. The consciousness which, in identification with the body, thought 'I am the body, I am Mr. so and so, I am tall, etc., knowing

itself to be different from the body, because the body is inert while it is the knowing intelligence to which the former is an object, feels '(I am) *not this* (body)'. Together with this, it affirms its real nature, as initiated by the Guru, as *Aham Brahma Asmi* (I am Brahman). In the same way, the consciousness withdraws itself from the senses, mind, intellect, ego and Avidya, saying '(I am) *not this*; (I am) *not this*'. Thus when the Consciousness finally rests in itself, stands by itself bereft of all associations, it is itself and *knows* itself, and experiences 'I am Consciousness' or 'I am Brahman.' It is not that 'I' is one thing and 'Brahman' is another thing, and that one thing says or feels, 'I am another'. It is not the Jiva's egoistic assertion, "I am Brahman." As we have seen earlier, Isvara, who is finally Brahman Itself, goes by the name of Jiva when limited to the Upadhis. Isvara limited to the Upadhi of Avidya is Jiva; Jiva freed from the Upadhis is Isvara. It is not this limited Jiva-consciousness, in the state of Avidya, that feels, 'I am Brahman', but Isvara Himself that feels so. It is one thing feeling and experiencing that it is itself only. It is what is that knows what it is. It is Self-Consciousness of God, as 'I am' or '*Ahamasmi*'.

It is something like this: when we ask Mr. Krishna, "Who are you?" he would say, "I am Krishna." But, to himself, he does not say, "I am Krishna", but only feels, 'I am' or 'I exist'. Similarly, when the Guru gives initiation, saying, "*Tat Tvam Asi*" (That Thou Art), the student says, "*Aham Brahma Asmi*" (I am Brahman) and also affirms so in meditation while negating the body, etc., by the *Neti, Neti*, doctrine. Finally, as a result of intense and prolonged meditation and the dawn of Divine Grace, Self-Consciousness supervenes in *Samadhi*, and the Jiva-consciousness attains freedom or Liberation—*Mukti*. The liberated consciousness rests in itself and knows itself as '*Ahamasmi*'.

It will be seen from the above that meditation is an effort to withdraw the externalised consciousness, internalise it and finally universalise it, and that meditation culmi-

nates in the state of knowing by being, which is an *Experience*,—*Samadhi*.

Mukti or God-Realisation is not necessarily an after-death attainment, but an *Experience* or state of Consciousness, which can be had *here and now*, while yet living in this body. This is called as *Jivanmukti*, and it has been attained by many saints like Appar, Sundarar, Jnana Sambandar, Arunagiri, Swami Sivananda, and others. *Mukti* can be attained here itself because God is not somewhere in the seventh heaven or in some particular place, so that the soul has to go there, after death, to attain Him. He is the universal Reality, Omnipresent and Omniscient. He is everywhere and so He must be attainable here itself. If God cannot be experienced here, He cannot be experienced elsewhere, too; because if He is not here, He cannot be there, also. And if God is elsewhere, He must also be here; otherwise He ceases to be the God eternal and becomes an object, like any other object, however big, superior and glorified He might be, and will be subject to the limitations of an object. Hence *Mukti* is and can be attained here itself, and this is the state conferred in this verse, which is denoted by the terms '*Neri*' and 'the Incomparable *Vel*' by Saint Arunagiri.

The popular and well-known meaning of the term '*Neri*' is way, path, method or technique. And so the first two lines of the verse are often interpreted as "No sooner the Lord of the Incomparable *Vel* (Skanda) gave Upadesa on the method of knowing the Object (of meditation) by thinking without thinking. Avidya ceased." But one of the meanings of the term '*Neri*' is '*Mukti*' and it is in this sense that Arunagiri uses the term here, which meaning is better suited than 'method'. Because, if it is mere Upadesa of a method or technique, how can it bring about the destruction of Avidya *at once*? The technique has to be put into practice before the desired result could be achieved. Hence '*Neri*' cannot mean 'a method' in this context.

It is interesting to note that, in the work *Kandar Anubhuti*, Arunagiri employs the term '*Neri*' only in two

verses—verses 21 and 42; the former verse is a prayer to grant His Lotus Feet to attain Mukti, and latter is granting of Mukti.

In verse 21 also, 'Neri' refers to Mukti and not a way or method, because by the granting of the Lord's Feet one at once attains Mukti and not merely a way to achieve something. The Lord's Feet (which represent *Paramapada*, or Omnipresence) are themselves the Object of attainment and not a means to something else. This is evident from the prayer of the Saint in verse 35 wherein he says, "When shalt Thou grant me Thine Lotus Feet that I may attain Liberation or Mukti," as also of the prayer of verse 41. So the granting of the Feet is itself Mukti which again is confirmed in verse 44.

Thus, 'Neri' is 'Mukti', i.e., a state and not a method; an *end* and *not a means*.

As though to clarify and confirm that this 'Neri' of knowing the Object (of attainment) by thinking without thinking is a *state* granted (Mukti) and *not a technique* instructed, Arunagiri says that the 'Neri' is 'the *Vel* Incomparable.' It is not that two things were granted—'Neri' and the *Vel*,—but the 'Neri' is the *Vel*. He identifies them by saying 'Neriyai' 'Velai'. And as we know, the Incomparable *Vel* is not a means to Knowledge but is Knowledge Itself; it is the *Jnana-Vel*. It is Absolute Consciousness as we have seen in verse 40.

The master-stroke comes when Arunagiri completes the verse saying, "No sooner is this granted than the relations with the world ceased, speech ceased, mind ceased, intellect ceased and ignorance (Avidya) also ceased." All this is achieved, especially the destruction of Avidya, only when the Jiva is absorbed in God, i.e., in Self-Consciousness. The Universal, due to Avidya, regards itself as the particular and in the process of meditation when the Jiva is granted the *Vel* or the state of Knowing the Object (the Universal) by thinking without thinking, it returns to Itself, and Avidya

is destroyed. Avidya cannot cease to exist by mere instruction on a technique of meditation.

In fact this verse itself is the attainment of the Goal or God-Experience, though the Experience is given a grander, more magnificent and positive expression in the next verse. Here it is expressed in mystic terms; in the next verse it is explicitly said, employing the term *Anubhuti*. Hence that is regarded as the climax of the treatise.

This is a rare verse which conveys a grand, mystic experience,—difficult to understand, more difficult to explain and indeed most fortunate to have, all which become easy by the Grace of the Lord with the Incomparable *Vel*.

[As a result of the determined effort at establishment in the *Vel-Consciousness* or '*Aham Brahma Asmi*' meditation (verse 40), which was duly intensified by a longing to attain the state of Jivanmukti or liberation *here and now* (verse 41), the Sadhaka is now granted the state of *Mukti* or *Vel-Consciousness*, by which the individuality-consciousness (Avidya) is annihilated. Here is an open and emphatic declaration that Avidya ceased (*Ariyaamai Attradhu*),—the ignorance which still remained undestroyed (verse 29) even after the glimpse of Cosmic-consciousness in meditation (verse 28). This is the state of *Samadhi*,—the state of Being-Consciousness or "Knowledge called Serenity" (*Poraiyaam Arivu*) attained by meditation on '*Aham Brahma Asmi*', which destroys Avidya,—the fulfilment and the realisation of the instructions of the Guru (verse 37). This grand Experience is portrayed more vividly and in positive terms in the next verse, as *Pesaa Anubhuti* or 'Speechless-Experience'.

We may regard each of the verses 42, 43 and 44 as the attainment of the Goal, though it is differently given expression to. In fact this verse is the actual attainment, and verses 43 and 44 seem to be recapitulations mixed with a gratitude-expressing attitude.

As seen in the last verse, the *Vel* and the Lord's Feet mean one and the same thing, and they go together. This is

confirmed by this verse. How? That 'non-thinking and non-forgetting state (of Mukti), which is attainable by the grant of the Lord's Feet (verse 21), is 'the state (of Mukti) of Knowing the Object by thinking without thinking' that is granted now. The "*Karudhaa Maravaa Neri*" is the "*Kuriyaik Kuriyaadhu Kuritthu Ariyum Neri*", i.e., the "*Neri*" (Mukti) attainable by the grant of the Feet is had when the *Vel* is revealed. From this it is quite evident that the Feet and the *Vel* mean one and the same. Their non-difference can also be seen from verses 40 and 41—while the effort in verse 40 was to fix oneself in an uninterrupted meditation on the *Vel*, the intensification of that effort is expressed as a longing for an immediate attainment of (protection under) the Feet, in verse 41. The revelation of the *Vel*, in this verse, naturally implies the simultaneous granting of the Lord's Feet as well, which fact is, of course, explicitly and categorically declared by the Saint in verse 44 which is an exclamation over, a gratitude for, as also an effect of, what has been granted now.]

VERSE—43

Thoosaa Maniyum Thugilum Punaivaal
Nesaa Murugaa Ninathu Anbarulaal
Aasaa Nigalam Thugalaayina Pin
Pesaa Anubhuti Pirandhadhuve

*She who wears clean gems and clothes,
Her Beloved, O Muruga, by Thine Love-Grace,
The desire-chain having been reduced to dust,
Was born Speechless-Experience, grand indeed most.*

“O Lord Muruga, the Beloved of her (Valli) who wears clean (garlands or ornaments made of) gems and clothes! By Thine Love-Grace, the desire-chain was shattered to dust (i.e., destroyed) and then Speechless-Experience (i.e., Direct Experience or Sakshatkara) was born.”

EXPLANATION

This is a very beautiful and sweet verse in which Arunagiri sums up the entire process of Sadhana as well as the attainment of the Goal. In each verse the Lord is addressed with words significantly meaningful, appropriate to the context. Here, the Lord is referred to as the Beloved of Valli who wears *pure* gems (ornaments) and clothes.

The hunter-caste girls (tribal women) wear different kinds of gems and clothes which are usually dirty. They do not keep their clothes and ornaments very clean and pure. But Valli, though brought up in the hunter-caste, wore clean clothes. Jivas are a product of Avidya, i.e., *Malina* (impure) *Sattva*,—Sattva mixed with *Rajas* and *Tamas*, which may be said to be represented by the general mass of hunter women. But, aspiring souls that yearn to attain the Lord do intense austerities, eschew their impurities (Rajas and

Tamas) and develop pure Sattva, like Valli who wore clean clothes. This is what Arunagiri seems to denote when he says, "She who wears *clean* gems and clothes." This description of Valli is so very unusual and different from the rest of her in the treatise and is meant to indicate the state of total purity (Suddha Sattva) attained by the Jiva in the state of Samadhi (of the previous verse), when the Lord becomes the true Beloved of the Jiva. The Lord is the beloved of such purified souls, as they, by the purity developed through intense Sadhana and meditation, render themselves fit to receive and experience the Divine grace in a full measure.

Why is the Lord the Beloved of Valli? Or, what is it that attracted or endeared the Lord to her and to be her Beloved? Is it her riches, her erudition, her high birth, or social status? No; none of these. Her pure love attracted the Lord. On hearing from Rishi Narada of her undivided devotion for Him even from her previous birth, Lord Skanda left His abode for Vallimalai where, in the fields, she was protecting the corn. He was not enamoured of her wealth, etc., which have no meaning for the Lord. What brought glory to Valli and what endeared her to the Lord was not her riches (gems, pearls, etc.), her princeliness, etc., but simple devotion, pure love to the Lord. Wealth, position, etc., are great in the eyes of the world; but not in God's vision. His ways of judgment of one's greatness or worth is quite different from the human, social way of judgment. On the other hand, the more does one become 'small', i.e., simple, unassuming and humble, the more does one become 'great' in the eyes of God. Nothing but true, undivided, pure devotion of the Jiva can draw God's attention and grace, and He becomes the Beloved of such souls. This is very beautifully and meaningfully brought out by Arunagiri when he says that the Lord is the 'Beloved' of Valli who wears *clean* clothes and gems. This has the specific purpose of indicating the need for a whole-souled devotion on the part of the Jiva so as to attract the grace of the Lord and have Him as one's Beloved. Though the Lord loves all equally

and His grace is on one and all in the same measure, He becomes the Beloved of only those Jivas that are pure.

Is not God an embodiment of Grace? Why, then, should He shower His grace on Valli, i.e., pure souls, only? It is true that God is an ocean of grace and compassion. His grace is on all beings, and always. But, what about one's fitness to receive and experience it? The sun shines and sheds its light equally on all objects. But do they all reflect it in the same measure? No. Each object reflects it according to its capacity. A block of stone or wood does practically reflect nothing, while a polished brass or silver vessel reflects it partially; but a clean mirror reflects the light fully and radiantly. Even so, a Jiva that has rendered its *Antahkarana* or mind perfectly pure receives the Divine grace in its completeness, and shines. The Lord is, therefore, said to be the Beloved of such purified souls; and to bring out this fact Arunagiri says, "Beloved of her who wears pure gems and clothes."

Valli is the Jivatman. Her wearing clean clothes represents the whole-souled aspiration (love) of the purified Jiva to attain the Lord. Valli is *Ichha Sakti*,—purified and ennobled emotions,—which is all-consuming divine love, *Anbu*. She is a personification of *Anbu*. This *Anbu*, therefore, denotes all that she stands for,—absolute purity developed by intense Sadhana, single-minded devotion and firm determination to attain the Lord, all carried on patiently and unremittingly, with great enthusiasm, awaiting the Lord's grace. This Jiva's self-effort or *Anbu* draws divine grace or *Arul* according to the degree of its intensity. To the extent the Jiva is pure and evinces love for God, to that extent divine grace manifests itself, i.e., to that extent the Lord becomes the Jiva's beloved. The love-attracted-grace, in turn, helps the Jiva put forth greater effort and thus draw more grace. Love attracts grace and grace enriches love. When this joyous process goes on steadily and reaches its zenith, love and grace fuse into one another, and become 'love-grace' or *Anbarul*.

"O Lord Muruga, the Beloved of Valli who wears pure gems and clothes, by Your love-grace, the desire-chain was destroyed and Speechless-Experience born," says Arunagiri. This love-grace has a mystic connotation. Neither by the mere love or effort of the Jiva alone, nor by the mere grace of the Lord alone are these brought about. Effort and grace should totally stand together, fuse into one another and become one, in order that the desires may be destroyed and Divine Experience be had. One can control one's senses, purify the mind, do intense Sadhana and love God wholeheartedly. Yet the final release from the shackles of desire is possible only when Divine grace joins it. The subtle desires in the form of *Samskaras* and *Vasanas* imbedded in the subconscious and unconscious, and Avidya are not easy of annihilation, by mere effort. They are wiped out when God chooses to reveal Himself, i.e., when His grace dawns. The Gita says, "The objects of senses turn away from the abstinent man leaving the longing (behind); but this longing also turns away on seeing the Supreme" (II-59). This is one aspect of the matter, i.e., grace should join effort. The other aspect is: Is effort necessary at all? Or, will not grace alone do? No. God and His grace are one,—they are inseparable like the sun and its light,—and God being everywhere and ever-present, His grace is also there everywhere and always, on all. But Grace can be made manifest or felt only in a purified heart, as sunlight can be reflected only by a clean mirror. Hence effort is necessary to draw or manifest Divine grace.

Now, another interesting question poses itself. Even after putting forth effort by the *Jiva*, and grace being ever-present, why do they not join and bring Divine Experience? This again is a mystery! We do not know when and how the two join and bring the Experience. God only knows. Hence the Kathopanishad says, "He whom the Self (God) chooses, by him He is known. To him He reveals His true nature." That is why we often come across dedicated and honest seekers who strive for God-realisation for years but yet not achieve the Goal. Because, effort is there but grace has not yet

joined it, i.e., God has not yet chosen. Hence such seekers should not get dejected, lose hope and give up their Sadhana, but patiently persevere awaiting the dawn of grace. Again, instances are many where apparently worthless souls, inimical to any spiritual growth, have had the unique blessing of sudden Divine Illumination. Who can understand God's ways!

Now, while the grace is of God, the love is of the Jiva. But Arunagiri says, "By *Your* love-grace," i.e., not only the grace is His, the love or effort of the Jiva is also His. How is this? The Jiva is a part of Isvara or God, and it has no existence of its own. Hence, on ultimate analysis, the Jiva's effort is also Isvara's only; it is a way of working of His will or grace. Divine grace expressed through the Jiva is self-effort or love; *Arul* working through the Jiva is *Anbu*. It is called love when expressed through the Jiva; it is called grace when received or experienced by the Jiva. In fact the two go together right from the beginning of Sadhana and experiences come at every stage of development of the soul, in varying degrees, though only at the culminating point of Samadhi they fuse into one another totally and give birth to God-Experience. Though the Jiva might regard itself as the doer of Sadhana, its effort is also Isvara's only even from the very start of Sadhana; but it is realised to be so only in the state of Samadhi. Men of wisdom, therefore, often say: God it is that appears to be in bondage, to be doing Sadhana, that showers and receives grace, that experiences Freedom or Realisation. Everything seems to be a play of God, very marvellous and mysterious, baffling human understanding, as Lord Krishna says, 'One sees This (the Self or God) as a wonder; another speaks of It as a wonder; another hears of It as a wonder; yet having heard, none understands It at all' (Gita: II-29). Such is the mystery of 'Your love-grace', and the purpose and peculiarity of the usage of 'love-grace' (*Anbarul*) is to denote the commingling or fusion of the two, to destroy the desire-chain and give birth to Speechless-Experience.

Arunagiri calls desire a chain. A chain has a twofold aspect. It acts as a fetter to bind the soul; and in itself it consists of rings, linked to one another. It is desire that stands in the way of attaining *Anubhuti*. Desires bind the soul to earthly existence and subject it to birth and death, again and again. Desire is bondage and freedom from desire verily constitutes liberation. This the Kathopanishad beautifully puts as, 'When all the desires lodged in the heart are cast out, the mortal becomes Immortal here and now.' The lesser the number or intensity of desires, the greater is the happiness, being closer to God; and the more the desire, the greater is the misery, being away from God. How far one is from God can thus be known by the number of desires that one cherishes or the intensity of desires that assail a person.

Desires are gross, subtle and even causal, and they are manifest not merely on the surface of the mind. They are often hidden deep in our being. They are lodged in the recesses of the heart. Our very personality is made up of desires. We are nothing but a bundle of desires in different layers. It will not be wrong to say that desires are we, and we are what our desires are. They dominate over our physical personality, psychological being and extend even upto the subconscious and unconscious levels. Hence they are compared to a chain. The desires that express themselves through our outer or physical personality have their links, like a chain, deep inside in the unconscious. The entire chain of desires has to be destroyed if God-Experience is to be had. Hence very significantly Arunagiri says 'desire-chain' and not merely 'desires'. "This desire-chain was made to dust by the love-grace of the Lord, and then Speechless-Experience ensued," says the Saint. Speechless *Anubhuti*, Maha-Mouna, Absolute-Experience, Bliss-Consciousness are all various terms that indicate the Grand spiritual Realisation of non-dual Awareness. This Awareness or *Anubhuti* 'was born', says Arunagiri. It was not given, because giving implies a giver, i.e., another person,—duality. God Himself is that Awareness or Experience. Who is to give it? When

the *Vel* reveals Itself, when Intuition dawns, when God-Consciousness supervenes, as stated in the previous verse, the Jiva-consciousness is absorbed in the Absolute Consciousness, and the latter alone remains by Itself.

A Grand Experience, which words cannot explain, is *born* when the desire-chain is destroyed by the love-grace of the Lord. When effort meets with Grace, when *Anbu* and *Arul* become one, which itself is a mystery, something more mysterious happens. The union of Jiva and Isvara results in the *Experience* of the Absolute or Brahman, which transcends the concepts of Jiva and Isvara. The union of the two gives birth to a third. It is not third in the sense that it stands in addition to the two, as in the case of the birth of a child which is there in addition to the parents, but it is third because it is neither of the two. The two vanish and in their place something *Unknown* is. This Unknown includes and transcends both, which are its apparent phases. This is the *Mouna-Anubhuti* that 'is born', wherein are transcended the usual concepts of Jiva, as an effort-centre, and of God or Isvara, as the bestower of grace or destroyer of desires. All concepts, whatever they be, are phenomenal and so are transcended; and "*Pesaa Anubhuti*", Speechless-Experience, supervenes or 'is born'. It is Speechless from the standpoint of the Jiva, because all its faculties cease then, as explained in the previous verse; it is *Experience*, pure and simple, from the point of view of Isvara, because even the acts of destroying and bestowing cease. It is mere Experience, *Pesaa Anubhuti*, of which nothing can be said. The coming together of *Anbu* and *Arul* gives birth to Speechless-Experience, due to *Anbu* or extreme love, the jiva loses itself in God and so becomes 'Speechless'. Due to *Arul* or Grace of God, the Experience is born. *Anbarul* is *Pesaa Anubhuti*; Love-Grace is Speechless-Experience. What wonderful packing and conveying of ideas! Even the Grand Experience is conveyed to a great extent, as much as language can contain and permit.

In the entire work of *Kandaranubhuti*, the term 'Anu-

bhuti' occurs only in this verse. This is a very wonderful and significant verse. Herein Arunagiri declares boldly that the Lord's Grace brought him Speechless-Anubhuti,—that Supreme state of spiritual realisation of non-dual Consciousness, of Bliss-Experience which is also called Maha-Mouna or Supreme-Silence. He also gives out, though hidden, the Sadhana that is demanded of one to obtain the Grace of the Lord which brings that *Anubhuti*. Both the attainment and the means for it are beautifully blended, couched in meaningful terms, in this verse. These verses are not merely statements of Arunagiri's experience or prayer as they may apparently appear to be, but they also indicate the practices that will lead to the Experience.

It is interesting to note that the heart plays the vital role in Sadhana and Realisation. Purity, love, grace, destruction of desires, birth of Anubhuti—these are the salient and successive points of the verse. Purity is of the *heart*. The heart is rendered pure by the annihilation of Rajas and Tamas, and development of Sattva. Devotion or Love emanates from a purified *heart*. Love attracts grace which is felt in the *heart*. The two commingle in the *heart*, and cause destruction of desires. Desires are lodged in the *heart*. 'Anubhuti' is then born in the *heart*. Thus, the heart is the arena of Sadhana and Sakshatkara. It is the point of meeting of effort and grace; of the particular and the Universal; of man and God; of Jiva and Ishvara. Hence the Narayana-upanishad says, "In the centre of the body is the sinless lotus of the heart, which is the abode of the Supreme Being. Further within that is the Sorrowless Ether, and That should be meditated upon." Hence any spiritual practice that does not emanate from, or is concerned with, the heart becomes more mechanical than vital, more hypocritical than real, more for others than for oneself; such a Sadhana becomes fruitless. The heart is the touchstone of spirituality.

The soul's cry of verse 39 is seen fulfilled in this verse. In verse 39, the soul prayed as, "O Lord, as You embraced Valli, come and embrace (grace) my soul; only then

the three Eshanas (that grip me) will come to an end, whereby my seven great births shall cease." Each item is correspondingly fulfilled in this verse. 'When shall the three Eshanas cease?' was verse 39. 'The desire-chain has been shattered,' is the answer now. (*Maayaividaa Moovedanai Enru Mudindhidum?* 'Aasaa Nigalam Tugal Aayina')—The three Eshanas are nothing but the desire-chain with links in the physical, subtle and causal levels of the personality; both bind the soul to phenomenal existence.

'In order to destroy the seven great births' (verse 39), 'Speechless-Experience is born.' (*Maavezh Sananam Keda* 'Pesaa Anubhuti Pirandhadhu')—The 'seven great births' are put to an end with the 'birth of Anubhuti'. The birth of the one destroys the other births. What mystery!

'Anbarul', as we have seen, is Muruga's Grace coupling with Valli's Love. It is the joining of Divine Grace with the Jiva's effort. It is God embracing the Jiva, for which prayer was offered in verse 39, which comes to pass now. That is why there is reference to Valli in both the verses. Thus, the prayer asked for in verse 39, followed by the determined effort (verse 40), gave a conviction that death cannot touch his soul (verse 41), revealed the *Vel* that at once swallowed up the Jiva (verse 42), and found its fulfilment in that Speechless-Experience, or the destruction of desires, through Love-Grace in this *Anubhuti* verse.

This verse, again, is the fulfilment of the prayer of verse 2: "O Lord Muruga, Pray grant me that all-ceasing and mine-losing Good." 'All-ceasing' takes place when 'the desire-chain is shattered'. (In 'Aasaa Nigalam Tugal Aayina', 'Ellaam Attradhu'.) 'Mine-losing' comes with 'Speechless (ness)'. In 'Pesaa (mai)' 'Yennai Ezhandhen'. The 'Good' is had in 'Anubhuti'. 'Grant me', was the prayer, and 'is born' is the fulfilment. ('Sollaai' is answered in 'Pirandhadhu'). The Prayer in verse 2 was made to Lord Muruga; He by whose love-grace God-Experience is born in this verse is, again, Lord Muruga. The order of the prayer and the fulfilment is also sequential: *Ellaam Ara; Ennai Ezhandha;*

Nalam; Sollai—Aasaa Nigalam Thugal Aayina (Pin); Pesaa; Anubhuti; Pirandhadhu.

Thus, this verse sums up the entire course of Sadhana, i.e., the entire instruction of the treatise, culminating in the Attainment. How beautifully Saint Arunagiri portrays in one verse everything about Sadhana and the Attainment—the soul's longing for God, total purity, prolonged Sadhana with love till Grace joins it, God's love for the soul, the dawn of His Grace that destroys the desire-chain, and the birth of the grand God-Experience in Maha-Mouna!

The verse ends with '*Pesaa Anubhuti Pirandhadhuve*'—'Speechless-Experience was born'. Some, therefore, consider that the work *Kandar Anubhuti* ends with this verse, and that the remaining 8 verses are not Arunagiri's. Others, however, hold that all the 51 verses are Arunagiri's own compositions, because of certain evidences being available to that effect and the remaining verses being of a special type.

[In the heart of the Sadhaka, that is rendered perfectly pure and filled with longing (love) for God or *Mumukshutva*, Divine Grace is attracted and the commingling of the two breaks the causal desire-chain or Avidya, and there blossoms forth *Pesaa Anubhuti* or God-Experience.

The grand Goal fixed (and prayed for) in the beginning of one's Sadhana (verse 2) and for the attainment of which so much of ordeal has been gone through, is realised now. That 'all-ceasing and mine-losing Good' has been attained.

This verse seems to be more of the nature of a recollection of the Divine Experience born of the Infinite Grace of the Lord, on emerging from that Experience; it, evidently, is also a summing up of the entire process, as the Experience is but a culmination of it.

Verses 42 and 43 may be regarded as complementary—one leading to and entering into Samadhi and the other rising from it. The success of meditation, culminating in Super-Consciousness and the simultaneous cessation of all the faculties of the Jiva are described in verse 42. A memory

of the Bliss-Experience of Samadhi on rising from it is portrayed in verse 43.

Just as on getting up from sleep one says, "I enjoyed a blissful sleep; I knew nothing," though he had no experience while in sleep; on rising from Samadhi (which was attained in verse 42), he retains a vivid memory of that Bliss-Experience on account of the persistence of its impressions in the 'Suddha-Sattva-predominated Antahkarana. This is so vividly portrayed in this verse. This Bliss-Experience is a lasting one, and persists even on emerging from Samadhi, because of the intensity of previous practice coupled with Divine Grace.

Now, the Sadhaka becomes a Siddha Purusha, a Jivan-mukta Purusha, a sage. He is no more a Jiva, an effort-centre, and there is no more need for him to do conscious Sadhana, for it becomes natural and spontaneous, his inner awareness of Reality being unbroken and steady. Evidently that is the reason why there is no mention of Valli (who represents the Jivatman) from verse 44 onwards.

It is rare that souls gifted with *Pesaa Anubhuti* remain absorbed in Samadhi and never rise from it. Usually they do come out of Samadhi and engage themselves in *Loka-sangraha*,—acts of compassion for the solidarity of the world. As their inner awareness of God is steady, they radiate joy and bliss; they are regarded as moving Gods on earth, and their actions are verily God's actions. To see such great souls (Mahatmas), to get an opportunity to serve them, to listen to them and be guided by them is indeed a rare privilege. Just as God came as the Guru of the Sadhaka in the beginning of his practices and guided him, God, in turn, makes him guide other seeking souls. Hence it would not be right to regard that the work *Kandar Anubhuti* ends with this verse. The liberated soul moves about freely, ministering spiritual food to hungry souls, according to their needs; such are verses 45 and onwards which are, therefore, unique but variegated in nature. Thus, the world is never bereft of realised souls or Gurus to provide the needed guidance to aspiring souls.]

VERSE—44

Saadum ThaniVel Murugan Saranam
Soodumpadi Thanthadhu Sollumadho
Veedom Surarmaamudi Vedhamum Vem
Kaadum Punamum Kamazhum Kazhale

*Murugan, the Great, with the destroying, Peerless Vel,
Granted His Feet to be crowned,—O, what to tell!
Moksha, gods' glorious heads, and the Vedas eternal,
Shine with the Feet, the hot forest and the field as well.*

“Lord Muruga, with the Incomparable and destroying Vel, granted His Feet to be crowned (on my head),— the Feet which shine as (or whose divine fragrance is emitting or felt in) Moksha, on the heads of the Devas, in the Vedas, in the hot forest and the millet-fields. O, What shall I say (of His graciousness) !”

EXPLANATION

This is a simple verse in its meaning, but its implications are great and many-sided. Saint Arunagiri exclaims over the rare blessedness that was conferred on him. What is that blessedness? Lord Muruga graciously offered His Feet to be crowned on Arunagiri's head. This is the highest blessing conceivable, for it confers Moksha on the recipient. The Feet that are granted are those, for whose manifestation on the stony tablet of his heart he prayed (verse 6); meditation on which, while giving away one's possessions in charity, frees one from transmigration (verse 7); by obtaining which one can give up all one's desires and be saved, i.e., liberated (verse 14); the grant of which means the attainment of the non-thinking and non-forgetting state of Mukti (for which he prayed, verse 21); to bow to which, feeling them as verily Satchidananda, is a great merit,

difficult of attainment (verse 22); non-thinking of which, due to the coming into active play of ignorance, is verily one's destruction (to overcome which was his prayer, verse 23); which alone are not red, i.e., Perfect, but He, whose they are, is Himself red in His whole being (verse 25); the grant of which was longed for to attain the state of Mukti and be freed from Karmas (verse 35); which are worn on the heads of Brahma and other gods (verse 36); and protection under which *here and now* means Jivanmukti, which he aspired for (verse 41). Such Feet were crowned on Arunagiri's head.

When the Lord's Feet are granted, what happens? The bound soul at once gets liberated, the Sadhaka becomes a Siddha. To that blessed one a new vision is opened up, as the Feet disclose their real nature. They shine as the Invisible, the visible, as well as the link between the two; as the Absolute, the phenomenal, as also that which bridges them. Arunagiri describes the Feet as the self-luminous state of Moksha, as shining on the heads of the Devas in heaven, as the (essence of the) eternal Vedas, as the (tender) Feet that shine in the dry forest and field. He uses the peculiar word "*Kamazhum* Kazhal", which does not easily lend itself to translation. It means, the Feet whose sweet fragrance emanates, or the Feet that shine, or the Feet that reveal themselves. By this what is meant is that the Feet are not visible physically, but that their divine presence is felt in a subtle way. As the fragrance of a flower cannot be seen but sensed, so are the Lord's Feet not perceived physically but felt and experienced intuitively, by the realised soul. This is the significance of '*Kamazhum*', or shine or emit fragrance. Again, while the act of granting the Feet is in the past tense, as 'granted' (*Thantha*), the Saint has used the present tense, as 'shine' (*Kamazhum*), in describing the nature of the Feet so granted. This also indicates that the Feet are not merely those that were placed on the heads of gods or walked over the forest and field in search of Valli, *then*, but that they are a *living presence* to the liberated

ones. The mention of a few places where the Lord's Feet shine is only symbolic, and is meant to suggest their omnipresence. Arunagiri's selection of places is significant.

Now, let us see where and how the Lord's Feet shine.

Moksha is the Goal of all human aspiration, attaining which life's purpose is fulfilled. It is the Consciousness of Absolute Freedom or Liberation. It is called *Paramapada*,—the Supreme Abode of Rest. It is the Divine Feet of the Lord. The Lord's Feet themselves shine as the very state of Moksha, and Moksha stands for the Absolute.

The Lord's Feet shine on the heads of the Devas. The Eternal and the Formless manifested Itself as Lord Skanda to alleviate the sufferings of the Devas. When the Asura Surapadma, under whose tyranny the Devas were suffering, was vanquished by the Lord, they all worshipped Him and placed His Feet on their heads as a mark of respect and gratitude. Thus His Feet shine on the heads of the Devas, i.e., in heaven. Those which shine as the Absolute also shine in and as the higher regions.

The Feet do not merely shine as the Absolute and the higher regions, they are also the means of attaining them,—the Vedas. The Vedas are the repository of wisdom. They are regarded as *Apaurusheya*, i.e., not man-made or composed by men, but as the revelations of the Supreme Being Itself. The Vedas are not the written books but the Wisdom Eternal, the ecstatic outpourings of the revelations of men of realisation. They have come down to us through the Guru-disciple tradition of hearing and reciting. Hence the Vedas are called as *Sruti* (what is heard or revealed) as distinguished from *Smritis* which are the works of human origin. The Vedas extol God and exhort men to seek perfection. They are replete with *Upasanas* and *Vidyas* of different kinds which are capable of bestowing upon the practitioner heaven as well as Moksha. As the Vedas are revelations of the Supreme Being and as they serve as means of attaining heaven or Moksha, they are regarded as the Feet of the Lord. The Lord's Feet, thus, shine as the Vedas. The

Feet which shine as the Absolute and in the higher regions, also serve as the means of attaining them.

This vast universe is the field created by God for the Jivas to undergo different experiences and finally attain Him. When the souls are ripe, drawn by their devotion, God manifests Himself on this earth plane to grant them Mukti. Valli's devotion drew Lord Skanda from His Abode to the millet-fields and the hot forest, over which He walked in search of His beloved. This is Skanda-lila, the playful sport of Lord Skanda. The whole of creation, of which the earth is the immediate object of our experience, is at once a field for the Lord's play and the Jiva's experience. It is the sporting ground and meeting place of Jiva and Isvara. This is so beautifully and symbolically brought out by Arunagiri in saying that the Lord's Feet shine on the hot forest and fields, as it is here that the Lord met Valli and accepted her. The Veda says, God sacrificed Himself and became this universe, which is one *Paada* or foot (i.e., one-fourth) of the Supreme Being, three-fourth being Immortal and Eternal. The Lord's Feet shine as this universe.

Thus, the Absolute, the higher regions, the Vedas and the earth,—the Lord's Feet shine everywhere. His Feet are the base, the means and the end.

By all this, Arunagiri brings out the Omnipresence of God, which is felt by the (realised) soul that is blessed with the Feet. When the Lord places His Feet on one's head, one gets the cosmic vision of the Feet and beholds them everywhere. Though the act of placing the Feet may be done once, its effect of beholding them everywhere persists forever, because the Feet-grant means also *Vel*-revelation, which is an inner state of consciousness. Hence Arunagiri uses the *past tense* for the act of granting the Feet, as 'granted' (*Thantha*), but uses the *present tense* while describing the nature of the Feet that were so granted, as 'shine' (*Kamazhum*).

So much regarding the glory of the Lord's Feet! What about His *Vel*? It is also equally great. We have seen

earlier that the Feet and the *Vel* go together and that they are identical. This truth is so beautifully brought home in this verse where the *Vel* also is glorified by two epithets—‘*Saadum*’ and ‘*Thani*’, i.e., ‘destroying’ and ‘Incomparable’,—to indicate its relative and Absolute aspects.

The *Vel* is Incomparable; it is the Absolute; it is identical with the Lord Himself; it is Pure Consciousness, as seen in verse 40. The ‘Incomparable’ (‘*Thani*’), therefore, refers to the Absolute aspect of the *Vel*. But it is not merely that; it is also the relative, it is ‘destroying’, too. The *Vel* destroys what? It vanquished the proud Asura Surapadma with his kith and kin, and brought freedom to the Devas. The Asuras are the external enemies and are symbolic of the inner foes of the Sadhaka,—*Avidya*, *Kama* and *Karma*, which the *Vel* destroys. It manifests itself as Sadhana-Sakti, as the needed subtle understanding to pierce through Avidya. This ‘destroying’ (‘*Saadum*’) is the *Vel*’s relative aspect. And when ignorance is thus destroyed, it stands as Pure Consciousness. It manifests itself as the means of removing Avidya and when it is done remains by Itself as the Goal attained. The *Vel* is thus both the means as well as the End; the relative and the Absolute; dynamic as well as static; ‘*Saadum*’ or destroying, and ‘*Thani*’ or Incomparable.

It is in this rare verse that both the relative and Absolute aspects of both the *Vel* and the Feet are beautifully blended, with a specific intention, viz., to suggest that it portrays the condition of the realised soul or Jivanmukta. Only he has the unique privilege of a simultaneous experience of both the aspects of Reality.

In the state of *Samadhi* (verse 42), which is ‘*Pesaa Anubhuti*’, the *Vel* is experienced as only the ‘*Thani*’ or Incomparable, and the Feet as only the ‘*Neri*’ (Moksha),—i.e., in their Absolute aspects. On rising from *Samadhi*, as a Jivanmukta, they are experienced (as in this verse) in both their aspects,—the *Vel* as not only the ‘*Thani*’ but also as ‘*Saadum*’, and the Feet as not only Moksha (‘*Veedu*’)

but also as the field and forest (physical plane),—i.e., in their Absolute as well as their relative aspects. Thus this verse makes clear that in the *Vel*-revelation of verse 42 is implied the Feet-grant also. But, while verse 42 is the experience of *Samadhi*, this verse is that of *Jivanmukti*.

The *Vel*-revelation of verse 42 and the Feet-grant of this verse are identical; they mean the same thing; i.e., the attainment of Mukti or Liberation. In verse 42, the state of Mukti ('*Neri*') was identified with the *Vel*, as '*Neriyai*' and '*Velai*'. Now, the same Mukti ('*Veedu*') is identified with the Feet. The *Vel*-revelation and the Feet-grant are therefore simultaneous occurrences, though the former may be regarded as an inner awareness while the latter an external act.

While the uninterrupted meditation undertaken is on the *Vel* (verse 40), what is aspired to attain are the Feet (verse 41); while the prayer of verse 41 is thus for protection under the Feet, what is granted or revealed in response, in verse 42, is the *Vel*; and while the *Vel* is revealed in verse 42, what is wondered at as having been granted are the Feet (verse 44). How interchangeably does Arunagiri refer to the *Vel* and the Feet, to suggest their identity or non-difference. And to confirm this, in this verse he brings the *Vel* and the Feet together, as "the Feet of the Lord Muruga who has the destroying, Incomparable *Vel*", in both their Absolute and relative aspects.

The state of knowing by thinking without thinking (verse 42) and the Speechless-Experience (verse 43) may be regarded as static identity with God; i.e., actual Experience of *Samadhi*, wherein all faculties cease. That one does not remain in that *Pesaa Anubhuti* or state of *Samadhi* but rises from it, and that even on emerging from it his 'contact' with God is not severed but that he beholds Him everywhere is mystically disclosed by this verse. Hence the condition described in this verse may be regarded as one of dynamic identity, i.e., the experience of a *Jivanmukta* on emerging out of the *Samadhi*-Experience. Only those blessed souls that

come down from the zenith of God-Experience can guide the world. They are the rare ones who are vested with a divine command as also the needed extraordinary power to fulfil the divine mission.

Thus, though the meaning of the verse is simple, its implications are profound and many-sided.

[On rising from the static identity (*Pesaa Anubhuti*), the realised soul beholds the Lord alone everywhere and in everything,—high and low, above and below, heaven and earth, Absolute and relative; and he dances in joy. The Jiva is now a Jivanmukta,—one in dynamic identity with God,—as a result of the Feet having been granted. The prayers of verses 21, 35 and 41 are thus seen to be fulfilled here, in their completeness.

Arunagiri says, "The Feet *were* granted." When were they granted? When the *Vel* was revealed (verse 42), the Feet were also granted, because the two are simultaneous and non-different acts. But, he could not express it then, because at once all human faculties ceased (verse 42) and 'Pesaa Anubhuti' was born (verse 43). And so, on emerging out of that Experience, he now recollects that gracious act of the Lord and exclaims over the same. Hence this verse is at once an exclamation over, a gratitude for, and an effect of, what has been granted in verse 42.

That the experience had in verse 28 is not complete realisation but only a glimpse of Cosmic Consciousness, while the Experience of verse 43 is actual Realisation, would become evident from what one feels on emerging from the respective experiences. On return to normal consciousness from that glimpse, the Sadhaka's attitude was one of a sort of remorse, for he finds himself in (*Ille enum*) Maya (verse 29), though this experience of Maya is not as bad as that of his in the earliest stage of Sadhana (verse 5). But on rising from *Pesaa Anubhuti* or Realisation, he experiences a sense of Joy, and feels God's Omnipresence, i.e., beholds the Lord's Feet everywhere. Again, even after that glimpse, Avidya persisted (*Ariyaamai Porutthilai*; verse 29), where-

as here Avidya gets destroyed before the grand Experience comes (*Ariyaamai Attradhu*, verse 42; and *Aasaa Nigalam Thugal Aaayina*, verse 43). Since only the ego was swallowed up, for the time being, in that glimpse-experience of verse 28 and its root (i.e., Avidya) was not destroyed, the instruction of verse 37 was to destroy the 'ego to its root', i.e., Avidya.

Ariyaamai Attradhu (verse 42), *Pesaa Anubhuti Pirandhadhu* (verse 43) and *Saranam Thanthadhu* (verse 44) are all emphatic declarations of the attainment of the Goal. This group of verses has a special charm and significance. The Jiva (or individual) sheds its Jivatva and enters into God-being (verse 42); Experiences or becomes (i.e., be) God (verse 43); and emerges as a God-man (verse 44). These ideas are so beautifully hidden in these verses.

Thus, this verse portrays the joy of the Jivanmukta on his rising from God-Experience.]

VERSE—45

Karavaagiya Kalviyulaar Kadai Senru
Iravaavagai Meipporul Eeguvaiyo
Kuravaa Kumaraa Kulisaayudha Kun-
Jaravaa Sivayoga Dhayaaparane

*Not to approach men, who their learning conceal,
And beg of them, will You grant me Wisdom Eternal?
O Lord with Vajrayudha! O Kumara! O Teacher Spiritual!
O Deivayanai's Lord! O granter of Yoga, the Grace all full!*

“O Master Divine! O Lord Kumara! O Lord having the weapon Vajra! O Consort of Deivayanai! O Embodiment of Grace, Who grants Siva-Yoga! Wilt Thou (graciously) grant me the Wisdom Supreme, so as to obviate the need for me to beg at the doors of those who conceal their learning? (Kindly grant me.)”

EXPLANATION

Arunagiri asks of the Lord to grant him Divine Knowledge, the essence of all learning, to avoid the need for him to go to and beg of Pandits or men of learning who hide their knowledge. It is not that Arunagiri is against learning, but he disapproves of the idea of approaching those who are unwilling to part with what they possess. Learning is necessary. It is also a gift of God. The learning we have (from books and teachers) and our Knowledge (that dawns from within) are both from the Lord (verse 17). Hence learning as such is not bad, but learning that loses sight of its purpose at the hands of unspiritual pedantics is what is disapproved by Arunagiri.

The great law is: ‘Give and it shall be given to you tenfold, hundredfold, manifold.’ Especially in the case of know-

ledge one does not lose by giving, for it is such a thing that it cannot diminish by sharing. On the other hand, it increases the more it is imparted, as water from a spring in the river-bed wells up the more it is extracted. Wealth, food, etc., deplete when given to others, and these can satisfy the recipient only for a limited time. But the charity of knowledge or *Jnana-Dana* is a lasting one. Neither the giver loses anything by giving nor the recipient loses it at anytime. Both are benefited, forever. The glory of *Jnana-Dana* is therefore, greater than that of all other charities. Why, then, hide what one knows? Yet, generally men of learning do not easily impart their knowledge to others. They conceal it not knowing that God also hides Himself from them.

Why do people hide their learning? They are afraid that their 'business' will be affected if they impart it to others. Those who utilise their knowledge as a means of acquiring wealth, position, fame, power, etc., do not wish to impart it to others, lest the latter should compete with them. But the purpose of learning is something else. It is, as Tiruvalluvar says, to worship (attain) God. Those who direct their knowledge to its true purpose, viz., to attain God, never hesitate to share what they know with honest seekers. Such noble souls are Gurus, who are kind and compassionate by their very nature, from whom knowledge is to be sought.

Arunagiri prays to the Lord for Wisdom Supreme, for it can be granted by the Lord alone. Men of learning can give bookish knowledge, i.e., mere information, but not Wisdom, for they themselves lack it. After all, one has to go to someone, whether for learning or Wisdom. Then, why go to men; why not pray to the Lord Himself? And how beautifully the Saint contrasts the nature of men of learning with that of the Lord. They hide what they have, though what they possess is not the highest Knowledge, but only bookish learning. On the other hand, the Lord, says Arunagiri, is the granter of Siva-Yoga. Siva-Yoga or Siva-Jnana is the supreme state of Non-dual Consciousness and God is capable of giving it. Also, He is an embodiment of grace

and mercy. He is ever ready to give to those who really want it, if they approach in the proper manner.

One may wonder as to how to approach the Lord, for Wisdom? Guru is God, says Arunagiri. He addresses the Lord as Guru, because it is God who comes in a human form in response to one's sincerity and longing, at the appropriate time. God Himself is the real Guru of all. Hence no distinction is to be made between God and Guru. That God Himself is our Guru is known only by those to whom it is revealed by His grace, said Arunagiri (verse 13).

Now, how to recognise a Guru, is the next problem of seekers. On this Swami Sivananda says:

"Here are the characteristics of a real Guru. If you find these qualifications in any man, accept him at once as your Guru. A real Guru is one who is a *Brahma-Nishtha* (established in Brahman) and a *Brahma-Srotriya* (well-versed in scriptures). He has full knowledge of the Self and the Vedas. He can dispel the doubts of aspirants. He has equal vision and balanced mind. He is free from Raga-Dvesha, Harsha, Soka, egoism, anger, lust, greed, Moha, pride, etc. He is an ocean of mercy. In his mere presence, one gets Santi and elevation of mind. In his mere presence, all doubts of aspirants are cleared. He does not expect anything from anybody. He has an exemplary character. He is full of joy and bliss. He is in search of real aspirants.

"Mere study of books cannot make one a Guru. One who has studied the Vedas, and who has direct knowledge of the Atman through Anubhava can only be enrolled as a Guru. A Jivanmukta or a liberated sage is the real Guru or spiritual preceptor. He is the Sadguru. He is identical with Brahman or the Supreme Self. He is a knower of Brahman."

There is a lot of difference between studying under a spiritual Master (Guru) and men of learning. As the Guru is a *Brahma-Srotriya* and a *Brahma-Nishtha*, apart from his mastery over scriptures, his teachings will have the magical touch of personal experience, as he has already trod-

den the path, while those of learned men will be dry. Also, doubts and difficulties of various kinds will arise in the course of Sadhana, which have to be cleared then and there. This is possible only for a Guru as he has undergone them personally. Thus is the supreme importance of a Guru for seekers of Truth.

Guru being God Himself, the contrast made in this verse seems to be between real Gurus who are kind and compassionate, and dry Pandits who conceal and are miserly.

Kumara means the Lord of eternal youth. It also means, one who destroys evils. The Guru is the real *Kumara*,—his beauty consists in his possession of Divine Wisdom; and he has the powers to destroy the evils (Avidya, etc.) of the seekers.

Kulisa is a weapon in one of the twelve hands of the Lord. It is with this weapon that the Lord killed the Asura Simhamukha, the younger brother of Surapadma. As the Lord has the Kulisa weapon, He is Kulisaayudha. Kulisa is also the weapon of Indra.

Kunjara means elephant. Deivayanai, the daughter of Indra, was brought up by Indra's divine elephant Airavata. Hence she is called Kunjari. As Deivayanai is the consort of Lord Skanda, He is called *Kunjarava*. Also, as the Lord has an elephant, by name Pinimukha, as His Vahana or vehicle, He is called Kunjarava.

In the entire work of *Kandar Anubhuti*, there is reference to Deivayanai in this solitary verse. Arunagiri seems to have felt that a reference to Deivayanai would bring completeness to the work, as all else of Lord Skanda and His divine family is made mention of in this work, viz., Lord Siva, Uma Devi, Lord Ganesa, Valli, the *Vel*, the Peacock and the Cock.

Kulisa or Vajra is the weapon of Indra, too. Hence Indra also goes by the name of Kulisaayudha. 'Kulisaayudha Kunjarava' may, therefore, be taken together, meaning 'Lord Skanda Who has as His consort Indra's daughter Kunjari or Deivayanai'.

The prayer of Arunagiri in this verse does not mean that he lacked Wisdom, for he gave *Kandar Anubhuti* after attaining direct Realisation of God. It is, therefore, to be construed as his wholesome advice to seekers to approach a Guru for Divine Knowledge.

[Though as a Sadhaka one's goal is the attainment of that 'Good' which is God (verse 2), God has a definite mission for him to fulfil. He on whom God chooses to shower His grace, from and through him will God naturally get His work done. Thus the task of spiritual ministering is ordained to the Jivanmukta to whom God has given that Experience (verses 42 to 44). And for this reason it is that saints are considered as representatives of God or moving divinities on earth. Verses 45 and onwards are, therefore, of a special type. They are unique and highly instructive. They reveal the exalted spiritual moods and attitudes of a Jivanmukta who is always in God-awareness, to whom seeking souls resort for guidance; they naturally vary, but form solid advices to seekers. Hence we will find something peculiar in each of these verses, though no sequence can be seen in them.]

The Jivanmukta, who has realised God's nature of unbounded grace, feels pity over the lot of those ignorant men who fail to recognise the source of Wisdom (i.e., God) and do not seek it from Him, but approach men of learning (bereft of Wisdom) who are miserly by nature. Here is, therefore, his exhortation to people to approach a Guru, the visible God, for spiritual Wisdom.]

VERSE—46

Enthaayum Enakkarul Thanthaiyum Nee
Sinthaakula Maanavai Theerthenai Aal
Kandhaa KadirVelavane Umaiyaal
Maindhaa Kumaraa Marainaayakane

*Thou art my Mother as also my Father That bestows grace,
Pray, accept me, removing all my mental afflictions;
O Skanda! O Lord with Vel luminous! O Darling Uma's!
O Kumara! O glorious Lord of the immortal Vedas!*

“O Lord Skanda! O Lord with the self-luminous Vel!
O Son of Uma Devi! O Kumara! O Lord of the Vedas!
My Mother as also the Father that blesses me art Thou.
Destroy all (my) mental afflictions and ‘accept’ me.”

EXPLANATION

Saint Arunagiri offers a simple and direct prayer to the Lord in this verse. The prayer is simple, but it reveals the Saint's intimacy with the Lord. Such verses are the outcome of the oneness felt with God by Self-realised souls. Arunagiri feels his closeness to the Lord so much that he claims his rightful kinship with Him. Hence he says, “O Lord, You are my Mother and Father, too, that bestows grace.”

In this verse Arunagiri reveals the cause of our mental afflictions as also the way to annihilate them and ‘be accepted’ by the Lord. God is our Mother and Father; and He is ever ready to bless us. Our real kinship is with God, the Atman within. God is the universal Reality behind all the particulars (Jivas). He is ever beckoning us from within. But the Jivas ignore God and run after the objects of the world thinking that they can give happiness to them. In

this erroneous attempt, the Jivas suffer endlessly afflicted by desire, anger, greed, etc. The only way to get out of this predicament is to go back to God, renouncing the erroneous attitude developed towards the objects. This is done by recognising the Motherhood and Fatherhood of God,—the universal nature of God or the Atman. Not to recognise the universal Reality that is behind all the particulars, but to regard the particulars themselves as real, is the fundamental mistake of the Jiva and the cause of all its mental afflictions.

While our bodily parents are helpless to remove our mental sufferings (for they themselves are subject to them), why does Arunagiri address God as his father and mother and pray for relief from suffering? Here lies the great difference between our bodily parents and the Divine parents. When Arunagiri addresses God as Mother and Father, he hints at the universal Fatherhood and Motherhood of God. God is not my or your but everyone's Father and Mother. He is the Universal parents. The whole creation is His child; but not as in the case of the bodily parents, as separate from them, but in a peculiar way. The creation is the Cosmic body of God, as the Purushasukta says, of whom everything forms a limb. A recognition of the fact that God is the universal being and everything forms part of Him, will remove the wrong notion that things are external and are real in themselves, that we have to establish an artificial, objective relationship with them. We will then come to realise that all things are organically related to each other, and an attunement with God is at once an attunement with His vast creation. This will help the Jiva overcome externality-consciousness which is responsible for all its mental sufferings. The Jiva will then rest in God and enjoy Bliss. Thus, to be freed from afflictions one has to cease from externality-consciousness by the withdrawal of the Jiva-consciousness into God or Universal-Consciousness, which is what Arunagiri implies by 'acceptance by God'. This is brought about by the recognition of the Motherhood and Fatherhood of God. Hence Arunagiri first affirms his

true relationship with God, and then offers his prayer. The fulfilment of the prayer is therefore bound to come about, since the requisite condition is first fulfilled. "O Lord, I have recognised my eternal kinship with Thee. Therefore, remove my (false relations with things, which are the causes of all my) mental afflictions by accepting me (Thy child) in Thy cosmic bosom (Satchidananda)", is Arunagiri's prayer. In the prayer itself is the fulfilment echoed.

This verse seems to have greater implications.

"God is my Mother as well as my Father," says Arunagiri. God is not only the Mother, He is also the Father! How can one person be both the father and mother? This seems to be strange; but that is the Divine mystery and the clue for our liberation. In the worldly sense, the father and mother are two different persons; the father is not the mother and vice versa. Evidently, the child is a third one, i.e., different from and other than the parents! But in the spiritual sphere things are quite different. This new vision of illumined souls is given by Arunagiri. To them, God is the Father as well as the Mother. How? As the Absolute Para Brahman, God is the Father. As Maya, the inscrutable and inseparable power of Brahman, He is the Mother. As He Himself is the Father and Mother, the child, i.e., the Jivas and the world, is also He only. The Jivas and this creation are all, on ultimate analysis, nothing but Brahman Itself. Thus the non-dual concept of the Ultimate Reality is revealed when Arunagiri says that God is his Father as well as the Mother.

In the Gita, the Lord says, "My womb is the great Brahma, in that I place the germ; thence, O Arjuna, is the birth of all beings. Whatever forms are produced, O Arjuna, in any womb whatsoever, the great Brahma is their womb and I am the seed-giving Father" (XIV-3,4). The great Brahma (*Mahat-Brahma*) referred to by the Lord is the Mula Prakriti or Primordial Nature, which is also known as Avyakta or the Unmanifest. The Sankhyas call it Prakriti; the Vedantins call it Maya.

But there is a peculiarity with Maya. While Prakriti is a second and eternal reality other than the Purusha, Maya is not so. Maya is a mystery. It is a term employed to solve the riddle of the universe in which the Jiva finds itself, as we introduce an 'x' in solving algebraical sums. There is no 'why' and 'what' of Maya, as in the case of 'x'; its necessity is to solve our difficulty, the problem. When the sum is solved, which is the purpose, the 'x' vanishes as it was only *supposed* for the purpose of solving the sum. So is Maya. It is resorted to only to explain our *present* predicament,—the Jiva's inability to understand the relation between the Absolute and the relative; between the Invisible and the visible; between Reality and appearance; between what is and what appears to be;—in short, between God, world and itself. When Reality is *experienced* in the immediacy of one's own experience, the problem of this mysterious relation is solved and with it Maya disappears; the non-dual Brahman alone remains,—the God who is Father as well as the Mother. Hence a true understanding of the nature of God and our relation to Him, i.e., that of Maya, is the only means of freedom from suffering. Else we will be, as we are now, in misery. If a student does not know the principle and the technique of employing 'x' in a sum, he will only complicate the matter and will find himself caught up in a big mess instead of getting a solution for the sum. It is not unusual to see students endlessly working a sum, wasting sheets of paper and hours, where the sum could be solved in a few minutes. Thus, while 'x' can help solve the problem quickly, easily and correctly, if employed properly; it can also make one get giddy and puzzled, if the technique is not correctly learnt and understood from a teacher and employed wisely. So is the case with Maya. Those fortunate ones who are gifted with the needed subtle understanding and the grace of the spiritual Master understand this mystery behind Maya, cross over it and realise God. Others find themselves in a mess, asking hundreds of questions about it, raising objections against it, not knowing that thereby they only get more entangled

in it. It is purely God's grace that can save one from this miserable situation. Hence Arunagiri says, "My *grace-bestowing* Father, too, art Thou." The Lord also says, in the Gita, "Verily, this divine Maya of Mine, made up of the (three) Gunas (of Nature) is difficult to cross over; those who take refuge in Me alone cross over this Maya (through My Grace)" (VII-14).

It is grace (*Arul*) that reveals things in their true perspective. When that grace is not there, the Jivas (minds) are afflicted with varieties of pain and suffering, because they do not understand this divine mystery of Maya, i.e., their true relation to God and the world. They regard themselves as separate from God, and the world as a real entity outside God, with which an objective relationship is to be established. This wrong notion is the cause of all one's mental afflictions. And Arunagiri's prayer is for the removal of this wrong notion, and to re-absorb him in God. Arunagiri's addressing God as both the Mother and Father is to suggest that God is non-dual, which also means the non-differentiation of Jiva's and the cosmos from God. This frees the Jiva from externality-consciousness whereby it is freed from all mental afflictions; and enables the Jiva to rest in God, which is to be accepted by Him or absorbed in Brahman. By all this what Arunagiri seems to imply is that the secondless Brahman alone exists, that as long as duality is experienced the Jiva's afflictions cannot cease, and that to be freed from afflictions the Jiva has to recognise its true relation with the non-dual Brahman, i.e., become or be one with Brahman.

The nature of the Lord or the Atman with whom we have to re-establish or recognise our kinship is graphically given in the verse. He is addressed as *Skanda*,—the scorcher of enemies; the enemies of lust, greed, anger, etc., which are the causes of one's mental afflictions. Again He is the *Kadir Velavan*, or the Lord with the self-luminous *Vel*. It refers to the Self-revealing nature of the Atman. The Atman is a mass of Consciousness or Light that destroys the darkness of *Avidya* or ignorance. He is also the Son of Uma Devi,—

the *Tejas* or Light that emanated from the third eye of Lord Siva which finally assumed the form of Lord Skanda whom Uma Devi took and nursed. He is also *Kumara*, the remover of the world-delusion. And, finally, He is the Lord of the Vedas, the revealer of Wisdom, to 'accept' the soul that is thus purified of *Avidya*.

Thus, in this simple verse, which moves one to tears when recited even once with a sincere heart, Arunagiri makes a direct appeal to the Lord in a spirit of great intimacy with Him. He almost demands of the Lord the destruction of the afflictions of the mind and (then) to 'accept' him, as a child would demand from its parents. And so, he first declares his kinship with the Lord and says, "Thou art my Mother and my Father, too." He does not say, "Art Thou not my Mother and Father?" He categorically affirms his kinship and thus makes the way clear for demanding his claim of accepting him. The parents cannot reject the child. The child does insist on its demands and gets them fulfilled from its parents.

What Saint Arunagiri says of the Lord in this verse compares favourably with what the Lord says of Himself, in the Gita, "I am the Father of the world, the Mother, the Dispenser of the fruits of actions and the Grandfather; the (one) thing to be known, the purifier, the sacred monosyllable (OM) and also the Rik, the Sama and the Yajur-Vedas" (IX-17).

[God is our gracious Mother and Father, our very Self, and is the remover of all our afflictions. That He is to be approached with a parental kinship, as the Universal Self, and not as an extra-cosmic or other-worldly being, is the Saint's advice in this verse.]

VERSE—47

Aaraaraiyum Neeththu Adhanmeel Nilaiyaip
Peeraa Adiyen Perumaaru Ulatho
Seeraavarusoor Sithaiviththu Imaiyo
Kooraa Ulagam Kulirviththavane

*Transcending six-six, that state which is beyond,
Am I blessed to attain That as my fortune grand?
Destroying Surapadma who rose angrily to fight,
O Lord, You made heaven the Devas', duly cooling it!*

"O Lord Skanda! You killed the Asura Surapadma who rose against You hissing in anger (to attack), and restored the Devas (who were tortured by the Asura) to (their original abode of) heaven, cooling it and making it again as theirs. Transcending the thirty-six *Tattvas*, am I blessed to attain as my fortune divine that Supreme State which is beyond (the *Tattvas*)? (Pray, grant me.)"

EXPLANATION

Saint Arunagiri, in this verse, aspires for the highest Realisation of non-dual Awareness which is beyond phenomenality, by transcending the thirty-six *Tattvas*. A detailed account of the 36 *Tattvas* is to be found both in the Saiva Siddhanta and Sakti cult texts, though with a slight difference. We shall, however, here confine ourselves to the bare details, according to the Saiva Siddhanta philosophy.

I. *Atma (soul) Tattvas or Asuddha Tattvas—24*

(a) 5 *Karma Indriyas* (Organs of action)—hands, feet, speech, anus and generative organ; (b) 5 *Jnana Indriyas* (Organs of perception)—ears, skin, eyes, tongue and nose; (c) 5 *Maha-Bhutas* (Gross elements)—earth, water, fire, air and ether; (d) 5 *Tanmatras* (Subtle elements)—smell, taste,

colour, touch and sound; and (e) 4 *Antahkaranas* (Internal organs)—mind, intellect, ego and Chitta.

II. *Vidya Tattvas or Suddha-Asuddha Tattvas*—7

Kaala, Niyati, Kala, Vidya, Raga, Purusha and Mula-prakriti or Maya.

III. *Siva Tattvas or Suddha Tattvas*—5

Suddha Vidya (Rudra), *Isvara* (Maheshwara) *Sadakhya* (Sadasiva), *Bindu* (Sakti) and *Nada* (Siva).

While the Saiva Siddhanta and the Sakti cults recognise 36 Tattvas, with slight difference, the Vedanta and Sankhya systems recognise 24 Tattvas, with a little variation. According to one calculation, the 36 Tattvas of the Saiva Siddhanta and the 24 Tattvas of the Vedanta are both further sub-divided into 96.

Tattvas mean 'principles' or 'reals'; not absolutely but phenomenally real. Tattvas or categories are the fundamental rudimentary principles with which the metaphysics of any system of philosophy is built up. Hence each system of philosophy enumerates these Tattvas differently, though their purpose is the same,—to show the evolution and involution of the cosmos which provides the necessary field for the Jivas to work out their Karmas and thus attain Liberation. But God or the Supreme Being is beyond phenomenality; being the Absolute Reality, He stands transcending the Tattvas, whatever be their number. Thus while the phenomenal world of Tattvas is a relative reality, the Supreme Being is an Absolute Reality; and the liberation of the Jiva lies in its going beyond or transcending the Tattvas and be one with Reality.

Now, the Tattvas, whether 24, 36 or 96, are only evolutions of the one primordial Maya, or Avyakta, or the Unmanifest, which gets divided into Sattva, Rajas and Tamas, or Suddha, Suddha-Asuddha and Asuddha, etc., which further sub-divide themselves. Though the ramifications may vary, liberation lies in their transcendence, because the Supreme Reality is beyond them.

What is the relation between the Supreme Reality and the Tattvas or the phenomenally reals, is an intriguing question. The Supreme Reality, being Absolute or Infinite, cannot admit of anything else; and therefore everything else can be nothing but its condition, as the waves, ripples, etc., in the ocean. The Tattvas are nothing but waves and ripples in the ocean of Absolute Existence, i.e., they are conditions of Consciousness itself. This vast universe itself is considered as a wave in the ocean of Infinity. The Ashtavakra Gita says: "Knowing yourself to be That where universes throb like waves in the ocean, why do you run about like a miserable being" (III.3). "Let the wave of the universe rise or vanish of itself in me, the Infinite great ocean; I neither increase nor decrease thereby" (VII. 2). The Jiva's perception of the world is, therefore, like one condition envisaging another condition, one wave another. Hence it is said that Reality envisaged through the senses is the world of objects. Thus, we may say that the Tattvas are nothing but phases of Consciousness Itself, i.e., the objectified nature of Consciousness, or becoming-consciousness in different levels. When this becoming or objectification is transcended or sublated into Being or universalisation by non-objectification, Reality is what it is, which is Being-Consciousness.

Now, how to transcend the Tattvas? Is it to leave the Tattvas here and go to where they are not? No; because wherever one might go, one will still be within the Tattvas only. Where going is involved, it means it is in space and time which are Tattvas. Hence to transcend the Tattvas should connote something different altogether. It means the sublation or resolving of the Tattvas from their phenomenality into their Original State of Being. What does this mean? This can be understood by a study of our dream experience.

In dream, something very mysterious happens to the mind. We see in dream almost everything of the waking world,—there is the subject, the objects, the space that separates them, elements, etc., etc. The one mind divides

and objectifies itself into everything. But does anything really happen to the mind? No. And, to transcend the dream-world, has the dream-subject run hither and thither or do anything in the dream itself? No. Because whatever it might do, it is still in 'dream only. So, it has only to wake up. The mind or consciousness which has divided and objectified itself has only to withdraw itself, by thinking differently, and be conscious of what it is, which is called waking. In waking, the entire contents of the dream-world are unified into a single consciousness, i.e., everything of the dream becomes a content of a single mind from which they ramified, but in a sublated form. The swiftly running water, the hard stone, the vast sky, the perceiving subject, etc., of dream lose their respective characteristics or *Tattvatva* and become a single consciousness in waking. It is not that the dream objects have become something else in waking; the waking consciousness which objectified itself into dream, now freed from the objectification, is what it always is. Thus in waking, the different objects (*Tattvas*) of the dream-world not only lose their *Tattvatva* or objectness, but also become and be what they always are. Just as dream is transcended into waking, there is another transcendence from this long-dream of world-perception into universal waking of God-consciousness. In this God-consciousness, what now appear as objects (*Tattvas*) get transformed into and are experienced as phases of Consciousness in its universal state. Just as maintaining the dream-subjecthood and moving about in dream itself is not the way to transcend dream, but to wake up; so also to transcend the *Tattvas*, giving up the Jiva-consciousness and waking up into universal Consciousness is the only way, by withdrawal of consciousness into its Source, which is attained by meditation on the One Reality. The Supreme Reality is *Paramarthika Satta* (Absolute Reality); the world of *Tattvas Vyavaharika Satta* (phenomenal reality); and the dream-world the *Pratibhasika Satta* (apparent reality).

Of course, no amount of explanation can be adequate

in this respect. Why? Because it is a mystery. Can we explain how we descend into dream? Explanations are there as to how and why dreams occur; but not how we descend into it. Suddenly we find ourselves in dream, yet not knowing that it is dream that we are experiencing! Everything looks real. Again, how and when we wake up from the dream is also not known. Suddenly we wake up, and then only come to realise that we were dreaming. Similarly, how this creation has proceeded from the Absolute, how we are in our present state of perception of Tattvas, and how and when we transcend them and attain Liberation is all a mystery. Everything seems to be beyond human understanding and baffles the frail human intellect when pushed to logical limits. Even causality itself seems to be unintelligible, finally. The whole mystery is solved only when the Absolute is realised by the grace of God, which is the Mystery of all mysteries! Hence Arunagiri's wonderment, "Am I blessed to attain that Supreme State which is beyond, by transcending the Tattvas?" And in it is implied its achievement because it is Lord Skanda's nature (*Svabhava*) to restore everything to its original state, to which aspect of the Lord does the Saint appropriately appeal in this verse.

Heaven is the abode of the Devas. But Surapadma who obtained, as a result of his severe Tapas or austerities, unlimited powers as boon from Lord Siva, invaded Svargaloka or the heaven, set fire to it, captured the Devas and subjected them to humiliations of various kinds. The afflicted Devas prayed to Lord Siva for help, who gave Lord Skanda to lead them and destroy the Asura Surapadma. In the fight that ensued, the Asura attacked Skanda assuming different forms through his power of Maya, and the Lord who is beyond the tricks of Maya destroyed each form which Surapadma took successively. Finally, finding his tricks to be of no avail, the Asura decided to attack the Lord, Who was yet a boy, with his physical might and bear Him down. When he so rose against the Lord with great fury, the Lord threw His *Vel* and destroyed Surapadma. Skanda, then, released all the Devas from imprisonment, and order-

ed Visvakarma, the divine architect, to remake Svargaloka. In obedience to the Lord's command he made it more beautiful than before. Skanda restored Indra and other Devas to their rightful posts. Thus the Lord cooled the agonised hearts of the Devas as also the Svargaloka that was burnt by Surapadma and made it, once again, the abode of the Devas, whose rightful share it was.

The original abode of the Jivas is God. The Jivas have, somehow, forgotten their essential nature of Satchidananda and are wandering in this forest of Samsara and are being scorched by the fire of Tattvas. To forget one's true nature, to see multiplicity where One alone is, is the cause of the Jiva's suffering. It has to transcend this condition and be what it is, in its pristine condition of Absolute Consciousness. For this blessed State Arunagiri prays: "O Lord Skanda! Due to the Asura of Avidya or ignorance who has driven me out of my abode of Satchidananda, I am caught up in and scorched by the Tattvas. As you destroyed Surapadma, cooled the hearts of the Devas and heaven, and restored them back to heaven, pray have mercy on me and restore me to my Original Abode by destroying the Asura of Avidya or ignorance and thus cool my heart with the bliss of Satchidananda."

The verse is also interpreted differently, as the phrase 'Aaraaru' in the first line yields different meanings. The phrase is composed of two words, 'Aaru' and 'Aaru'; and the word 'Aaru' has more than one meaning,—the number six, river, path, method, means, religion, etc. Hence when the meaning 'six' is taken for both the words, it means six, river, path, method, means, religion, etc. Hence when the meaning 'six' is taken for both the words, it means six into six, i.e., 36, which usually refers to the Tattvas and this usage is widely prevalent in the Tamil literature. We have already seen this interpretation. The other interpretations of 'Aaraaru' are:

(i) The first 'Aaru' is taken in its meaning of 'six' and the second as 'religion'; and the translation would be: "Transcending the six religions, am I blessed to attain, as my

fortune divine, that Supreme State (of Brahman) which is beyond (the concepts of the six religions) ?”

The six major cults or religions of Hinduism, popularly known as *Shan-mata*, are (1) *Saivam*; (2) *Vaishnavam*; (3) *Saktam*; (4) *Ganapatyam*; (5) *Kaumaram*; and (6) *Souram*;—the cults which conceive of the Supreme Being as Lord Siva, Lord Vishnu, Devi or Goddess (Sakti), Lord Ganapati (Ganesa), Lord Skanda (Kumara), and Lord Surya (Sun), respectively.

Reality is One. It is Truth, Knowledge and Infinity. It is Brahman. It is conceived of variously by the wise ones, and different approaches are advocated to suit to the tastes and temperaments of different individuals as it is difficult to approach Reality as It is. Hence the need for different cults. Thus Lord Siva, etc., are the six concepts of the same Reality, and the six cults of *Saivam*, etc., are the six modes of approach to the One Reality. It is to be noted that Reality Itself has no religion; it is beyond all religions,—not only the above-mentioned six cults, but also all the religions of the world. Religion is for man, not for God; and Reality does not belong to any religion.

The different religions are, therefore, variegated approaches to the same Reality, and the personal Gods of religions, such as Lord Siva, etc., have a significant purpose to serve. They, being facets of Reality, are the points of convergence of the Absolute or the Universal, and they form, as it were, entrances to the Absolute. They are tentative concepts of Reality and have to be transcended, finally. This should not be lost sight of and aspirants should not cling to personal Gods, as if they are the ultimate state itself, since all forms get sublimated in the Supreme Being. Totapuri's instruction to Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa to transcend the concept of Kaali (Divine Mother) is worth remembering here. Hence whichever religion one may follow, Reality has to be realised finally, and that is the purpose of religions. That the Goal to be aspired for and realised is the Absolute or Brahman, and not the personal Gods

themselves, though the latter are necessary steps in the ascent, is what Arunagiri implies in saying 'that Supreme State which is beyond, transcending the six cults'.

It is very interesting to note that Saint Arunagiri, though a staunch devotee of Lord Skanda, was a great synthesiser of cults. It can be seen from his *Thiruppugazh* songs that he has devoted many verses in singing the glory and greatness of Lord Siva, Lord Vishnu, the Divine Mother, and other Gods in exquisite and inspiring language. Arunagiri was a votary of the Advaita, a sage of the highest non-dual Realisation. To him, Lord Skanda was not merely a personal God or a facet of the Absolute, but the Absolute Itself; as revealed by him in verse 13 and in one of his *Thiruppugazh* songs as 'The Truth of the six cults and philosophies' (*Aru Samaya Saattirap Porulone*). It is this attitude, this approach, that he wants all to have towards their respective Gods. The Goal is the Absolute, that Supreme State which is beyond, whatever be one's concept of God, whatever be one's religion, is Arunagiri's instruction, expressed in the form of his aspiration.

(ii) The first 'Aaru' is 'six' and the second 'Chakras', as stages in the path of Kundalini. The translation would then be: "Transcending the six Chakras, am I blessed to attain, as my fortune divine, that Supreme State (of Realisation, in the Sahasrara) which is beyond (the six Chakras)?"

Though the word 'Aaru' does not directly mean the Chakras, it is implied and derived, as they form the stages in the passage of the Kundalini Sakti, and such a usage is to be found in the Tamil literature,—in verse 2419 of *Tirumantiram*, a mystic work of Saint Tirumular; and in *Tiru Arutpaa* of Saint Ramalinga Swamigal.

The six Chakras are Muladhara, Svadhishtana, Manipura, Anahata, Vishuddha and Ajna. The Chakras, which are centres of energy, are in the astral body; they cannot be seen by the naked eye but are visualised by Yogis in a state of concentration of mind; they have their corresponding centres in the spinal cord and the nerve-plexuses in the physi-

cal body,—at the base of the spinal column, at the root of the reproductive organ, in the navel region (Nabhisthana), in the region of the heart, at the base of the throat, and at the space between the two eye-brows, respectively. The Kundalini Sakti, which is locked up in the individual in the Muladhara Chakra, is awakened by certain Yogic practices such as Asana, Pranayama, Bandha, Mudra, Dhyana, etc., and made to pass through the different Chakras and unite with Siva in His abode in the Sahasrara Chakra, at the crown of the head. The Yogi then enjoys Supreme Bliss.

The Kundalini Yoga is an exact science and is a subject by itself, too unwieldy to be dealt with here. However, we shall see some salient features of it.

Energy has two aspects,—static and dynamic, and the Kundalini Yoga is the method of bringing them together, by which a union is also brought about between the individual and the cosmos. In the process of the evolution of the cosmos, the Supreme Absolute has gradually, in stages, concretised itself until the Pure Consciousness has come to the level of matter, as this physical cosmos. And in the process of evolution of individuals, this cosmic energy gets pressed into the human system as a static potentiality, in the Muladhara Chakra. The human system is vitally related to the outer cosmos in everyone of its levels. The seven lower regions (nether worlds) of Patala, Mahatala, Rasatala, Talatala, Sutala, Vitala and Atala are said to be in the portion below the waist,—in the toes, soles of the feet, ankles, shanks, knees, thighs and the waist, respectively. Similarly the Chakras Muladhara, etc., which are above the waist are points of link with the outer cosmos, in its different higher levels or regions, and they correspond to the Bhur, Bhuvar, Svar, Mahar, Janar and Tapas Lokas or planes, respectively, and the Sahasrara to Satya Loka. Since, in the case of all ordinary human beings, the Kundalini Sakti is lodged in the Muladhara, we are conscious of only the physical cosmos.

By meditation on a Chakra, which is a focusing point

for concentration, the Yogi simultaneously establishes a contact with the corresponding Loka, and when the Kundalini Sakti is roused from a particular Chakra, he has full control over it and the corresponding Loka. Each succeeding Chakra, as also the Loka, being more subtle than the preceding one, the Kundalini Sakti is unfolded into greater and greater subtlety of consciousness as it transcends each Chakra, and when it goes beyond the Ajna and reaches the Sahasrara Chakra, it regains its pristine state of Pure Consciousness, when the Yogi enjoys Infinite Bliss.

Though energy pervades the whole of the human system, it gets located in certain centres, and generally it is in the Muladhara Chakra which is the source of energy for the entire system. As water whirls in a river, the Prana Sakti circles in these Chakras, and at each Chakra its whirling force takes a certain subtle shape which appears as the lotus with a particular number of petals. Hence each Chakra is compared to a lotus with a differing number of petals, and has a presiding deity, colour, shape, Bija-Akshara, etc. Since the Kundalini Sakti is a force, if it is awakened but not controlled properly, it is likely to do more harm than good. Hence a great moral discipline is demanded of the practitioner, and the Yoga is to be practised under the personal guidance of an adept. Thus if the sleeping or static Kundalini Sakti is awakened from the Muladhara Chakra by the practice of Asanas, Pranayama, Bandhas, Mantra-Japa and Dhyana, and is taken from Chakra to Chakra, to the Sahasrara or the thousand-petalled Chakra at the crown of the head, a union will be brought about between Sakti and Siva, between the individual and the cosmos, between man and God, which is the Goal of the Kundalini Yoga.

It is said that whatever be the Yoga practised, the Kundalini does get awakened and pass through the different Chakras, though unconsciously in the case of Yogas other than the Kundalini Yoga, and the Yogi gets different supernatural powers at different stages of his practice. As the Yogi is likely to be tempted by them and get stagnated at

any of these Chakras or stages, Arunagiri warns one to aspire for that Supreme State which is beyond,—transcending the tattvas, religions and Chakras. The Goal is the Absolute and it should never be forgotten.

[The advice of Saint Arunagiri, in this verse, is that the Supreme Reality which is beyond the 36 Tattvas, or Brahman which is beyond the six cults, or the Absolute which is beyond the six Chakras, is the blessed Goal and that should be aspired for.]

VERSE—48

Arivonrara Ninru Arivaar Arivil
Pirivonrara Ninra Piraan Alaiyoo
Serivonrara Vandhu Irule Sithaiya
Veri Venravarodu Urum Velavane

*Ceasing from every knowledge, those who know, O Lord,
Dost Thou not, in their intelligence, inseparably stand?
Their relations coming to nought and darkness destroyed,
O Velava! Thou abideth in them who their delusion have
conquered.*

“In the consciousness (intelligence) of those who know, duly ceasing from all (sensory) knowing, dost Thou not, O Lord, stand (in union) without the least separation? (And when this practice is repeated and intensified) Every (worldly, external) relation (due to Vikshepa) coming to nought, and the darkness (of the veil or Avarana) being destroyed, they overcome their delusion (Avidya); and, with them, O Lord Velayudha, Thou abideth (forever).”

EXPLANATION

This is an exceptionally rare verse in which Saint Arunagiri gives the secret of Yoga practice and the state of Divine Experience.

God is the Omnipresent Reality. He is everywhere,—far and near, outside and inside, above and below. Hence, He is ever with us, too. He is the very essence or substratum in us. Yet it is an irony that we do not feel Him, experience Him or realise Him. Why so? There is something fundamentally wrong in our seeking. We seek Him ‘outside’, as an object. But, says the Saint, He is to be sought as our very being, as the Self, as the Knower in us, as the Intelligence in us. How to do this? First we have to

cease from sense-perception. But, we are so much wedded to the senses that we do not know of any other mode of knowing. To us, what is perceived through the senses is alone real, and even God should come within the ken of sense-perception! This sensory-knowledge or the extroverted nature of the senses and mind has to cease first. The senses and mind must turn back; they should become introvert and still by the cessation of all kinds of sense-perception. Not even a single sense, including the mind which is the sixth sense, should be active. Hence Arunagiri says, "Arivu Onru Ara Ninru," i.e., established in that condition wherein not even a single sense (including the mind) functions. This is perfect establishment in *Pratyahara* (complete withdrawal of senses) which presupposes perfection in Yama, Niyama, etc.

After fulfilling this condition, we should 'know'. But we never do this. Without sense-control, without the practice of Yama and Niyama, without any check on the outgoing tendencies of the senses and the mind, we try to do concentration and meditation to realise God. How can it be successful? Hence, 'ceasing from every sense-perception', says Arunagiri. But when one tries to do this, the mind will play a trick or mischief. The natural tendency of the mind is such that it will either be active or go to sleep. If we check its outgoing tendency (Rajas) and try to concentrate, it will slip into inertia or sleep (Tamas). This contingency has to be carefully avoided. Consciousness must be maintained, and this is brought out in the word 'Arivaar' or 'those who know'. This knowing is, therefore, after cessation from every sense-knowing. Hence this is quite a novel method of knowing. It is knowing directly by the intelligence itself, freed from the trammels of the mind and senses. When the senses do not function and the mind is still, the intellect becomes steady. Then the Jiva-consciousness or *Chidabhasa*, which is a reflection of the Kutastha Atman or Pure Consciousness in the intellect, becomes completely self-centred. This self-centred *Chidabhasa* is what is referred to by 'Arivu', which is not intellect but the intelligence. Hence, the Jiva-consciousness should first be freed from

objectification (*Arivu Onru Ara Ninru*); it should also maintain consciousness, i.e., not go to sleep (*Arivaar*); in that non-objectified Chidabhasa coupled with self-awareness (*Arivil*), God or Reality stands in union, without the least separation (*Pirivu Onru Ara Ninra Piraan*).

What is this 'union without the least separation'? The Kutastha Chaitanya or the Atman is the unchanging Reality. It is the Witness Consciousness that ever shines. Its reflection in the intellect is the Jiva-consciousness or Chidabhasa. Ceasing from sense-perception, when the mind becomes still and the intellect steady, the reflection in it or the Chidabhasa also becomes steady and is in union with the Kutastha Atman. This can be made clear with the help of an illustration. The sun shines. Its ray falls on a mirror which reflects it. The sun may be regarded as the Kutastha and the reflection the Chidabhasa. The mirror, like the intellect, is the medium of reflection. Now, at the point of reflection in the mirror, where the sun's ray falls and the reflection emanates, the two are in inseparable union. At this point, we cannot say whether it is the sun's ray or its reflection. Whatever we may say, it is right; because both are there together and inseparably. The two cannot be distinguished at that point. This is the condition of the Chidabhasa and Kutastha in the higher reaches of meditation wherein, due to establishment in Pratyahara or sense-control and Dharana or concentration of mind, the Chidabhasa comes back to the source or point of reflection and shines not on any object but on the Kutastha itself. In that reach of meditation, the two are in inseparable union, as the point in the mirror, and the notion of 'I' here can equally refer either to the Kutastha or Chidabhasa, according to whichever it chooses or feels. Peculiarly enough, there is a subtle but vital difference between the sun's reflection in a mirror and the Kutastha's in the intellect. In the former case, the original (the sun) and the medium of reflection (and, therefore, the reflection) are apart, as the sun is a limited object; in the latter case the two are ever together, as the Kutastha is all-pervading. Hence, when the outgoing tendency of

the Chidabhasa is totally suspended, it returns to its source where it stands in its natural state of inseparable union with the Kutastha. This condition is experienced by us daily, in the state of deep sleep. But, there is no awareness then, and that makes the difference between sleep and meditation. The non-objectified awareness bereft of self-consciousness is sleep; the non-objectified awareness coupled with self-consciousness is meditation or Dhyana. Yet, this is not the highest attainment in Yoga, i.e., Self-realisation, because the cause of Jivatva is still there, Avidya not being destroyed. The highest attainment is Samadhi or Superconsciousness, which is still higher. Hence Arunagiri continues the verse and says something more, which indicates that this state of Yoga or 'union without the least separation' should become abiding whereby Avidya or the cause of Jivatva will be destroyed, when the Kutastha (or the Lord) alone will shine, i.e., Samadhi or Superconsciousness would supervene.

Now, back to the point. In the highest reaches of meditation, the Chidabhasa is in inseparable union with the Kutastha. This is not an easy attainment and even when this is achieved with great effort and dexterity it does not last for more than a moment, in the initial stages. This union comes and goes like a lightning flash. "One becomes careful then," says the Kathopanishad, "for Yoga is acquired and lost." Hence by repeated practice and vigilance, such moments of flash have to be intensified and made frequent, until finally this union or Yoga comes to abide permanently. What happens when the practice is thus persisted, is graphically portrayed by Arunagiri in the latter half of the verse in which is implied all that is mentioned above. Vikshepa comes to an end; Avarana is destroyed; the great delusion of Avidya or ignorance is overcome; and, with that blessed soul, the Lord abides eternally.

Arunagiri uses the term '*Veri*' for Avidya. '*Veri*' means delusion, confusion, madness, ignorance, etc. It, therefore, denotes Avidya. And he also clarifies what this Avidya is. It

has two aspects or powers, viz., *Avarana* and *Vikshepa*. *Avarana* is the screening power and *Vikshepa* the projecting power. *Avarana* is the screen-like darkness (*Irul*) that hides Reality or the Atman, and *Vikshepa* causes tossing of the intellect and the mind on account of which duality is perceived and relationships are established with the world outside.

External relations with the world of objects are brought about by one or the other of the five senses, which are activated by the mind. In the *Pratyahara*-perfected meditation this sense-activity completely ceases. Not even a single kind of relation is had with the world, because not even a single sense operates. Hence Arunagiri says 'every relation having ceased' (*Serivu Onru Ara Vandu* because of *Arivu Onru Ara Ninru*). This cessation of all relations is freedom from *Vikshepa*, which means a total annihilation of *Rajas*. This is the precondition for the destruction of the veil of darkness or *Avarana*, which is predominantly *Tamas*. When *Vikshepa* is overcome and the senses and mind are totally brought together, the mind becomes tremendously powerful as there is no dissipation of energy through sense-activity. With this extraordinary, concentrated power, if the mind is not allowed to slip into inertia or sleep but awareness maintained, the darkness or the veil of *Avarana* is destroyed. Thus, when, by repeated practice, the state of Yoga or inseparable union attained in the highest reaches of meditation becomes abiding, every relation with the world (*Rajas* or *Vikshepa*) comes to an end and darkness (*Tamas* or *Avarana*) is destroyed. What happens, then? *Vikshepa* and *Avarana* being the two powers of *Avidya*, their destruction is the annihilation of *Avidya* itself. The Jiva being *Malina Sattva*, i.e., *Sattva* mixed with *Rajas* and *Tamas*, with the cessation of *Vikshepa* (*Rajas*) and destruction of *Avarana* (*Tamas*), the intellect which is the medium of reflection becomes *Sattvika* or *Sattva*-preponderated; and in it the *Kutastha Chaitanya* or the Witness Consciousness shines unobstructed and undistracted. The *Kutastha* is referred to as the *Velavan*. It is the *Vel*-Consciousness referred to in many earlier verses. Out of the many names of Lord Skanda,

Arunagiri significantly uses '*Velavan*' here to suggest that the Lord abides forever in those that have thus overcome their ignorance, as Wisdom or Consciousness. Such blessed souls are the Jivanmuktas, Jnanins, sages or God-men who have attained the Goal.

In this single verse Saint Arunagiri dexterously and precisely brings together the imports of the concluding teachings of the Kathopanishad,—of Mantras 10, 11, 14 and 15 of Valli VI. The first half of the verse may be said to correspond to Mantra 10 which says, "When the five organs of knowledge stand together with the mind and the intellect does not function (i.e., becomes calm), that they call the highest state." This seems to be the highest state reached in meditation and not the highest attainment itself, for this Yoga or 'union without the least separation' is lost, if one is not vigilant. Hence Mantra 11 gives a note of warning: "The firm control of the senses, they regard as Yoga. At that time one gets careful, for Yoga is acquired and lost." Thus, if with utmost care this awareness of Yoga or union is repeatedly had and made abiding, in due course the knots of the heart are broken and the goal is attained, as revealed in Mantras 14 and 15. "When all desires that dwell in the heart of one cease, then the mortal becomes immortal and here attains Brahman." "When all the knots of the heart are severed here on earth, then the mortal becomes immortal, so far is the instruction." The destruction of the knots of the heart (Avidya, Kama and Karma) of the above Mantras are precisely conveyed by Arunagiri in the latter half of the verse,—Avidya is explicitly mentioned, and Avarana and Vikshepa may be said to correspond to Kama and Karma, respectively. The need for continued practice with vigilance, which is the import of Mantra 11, can also be seen hidden and implied in the wordings of the last two lines of the verse, which are so aptly composed by Arunagiri as to bring out this implication, effectively.

One more interesting matter exhibits Arunagiri's skill in disclosing subtle secrets of spiritual experience of seekers.

God, being the omnipresent and all-pervading Reality, is ever with us, in inseparable union. Though this is a fact, our awareness of this inseparable union has three distinct conditions or stages and these are revealed by the Saint in this verse.

Firstly, the Lord is the '*Piraan*', i.e., one who is never separate from anything,—who is in union with all things, at all times. But this is the condition in which we are not at all aware of His inseparable existence with us. He is with us, with everything; but we are not aware of it, much less the insentient objects. This is the general condition of Jivas; and this is also the lowest stage of manifestation of Reality (God) wherein only the *Sat* or existence aspect of It is revealed.

Secondly, the Lord 'in inseparable union in the intelligence that knows, duly ceasing from sensory-knowing' (*Arivaar Arivil Pirivonrara Nirpavan*). In the highest reaches of meditation, there are moments of intuitive flashes when one gets glimpses of awareness of God's inseparable union with us as awareness. This is the meditative condition, in which the meditative consciousness knows God, though for a moment, as Consciousness inseparable from it; this is the higher stage of manifestation of Reality wherein the *Chit* or consciousness aspect of It also is revealed.

Thirdly, due to vigilant and continued practice of meditation when the destruction of Avidya is brought about, the Lord 'abides in inseparable union with them' (*Veri Venravarodu Urum Velavan*). This is the state of Realisation or *Sakshatkara*. Here the union is perpetual or abiding, and because Avidya is annihilated it is also blissful; this is the highest stage of manifestation of Reality wherein the *Ananda* or bliss aspect of It is also revealed.

These three conditions may be said to be the *Ajnana Avastha*, *Dhyana Avastha* and *Anubhuti Avastha*; wherein, respectively, the Jiva is not conscious, momentarily conscious and abidingly or perpetually conscious of the inseparable

union of the Lord who is ever with it; wherein also the *Sat*, *Chit* and *Ananda* aspects of Reality (*Satchidananda*) are progressively revealed.

[Arunagiri in this verse instructs on the secret and essence of Yoga practice and Realisation.]

VERSE—49

Thannanthani Ninradhu Thaan Ariya
Innam Oruvarkku Isaivippadhuvo
Minnum Kadir-Vel Vigirdhaa Ninaivaar
Kinnam Kalaiyum Krupaisoozh Sudare

*That which Is by Itself, by oneself is It to be realised;
To yet another can that (Experience) be disclosed?
O Lord with the twinkling Light-Vel and of forms varied!
Misery-remover of those that think, O Resplendence, grace-
surrounded!*

“O Lord of twinkling self-luminous Vel, with forms varied! O Grace-surrounded Resplendence, that removes the misery (of Samsara) of those that think (of Thee)! That (Supreme Reality) which is Alone by Itself (i.e., One without a second) is to be realised by oneself (by being It); can It (or that Experience) be related to yet another!”

EXPLANATION

Each verse in the concluding portion of *Kandar Anubhuti* excels the other in profundity and spiritual depth. They reveal Saint Arunagiri's extraordinary capacity to express the highest Vedantic truths in simple terms and yet convey their precise imports. Here is yet another verse of a rare calibre.

Ekameva Advitiyam Brahma—‘One without a second is Brahman’, says the Veda. The Supreme Reality is secondless. This is what Arunagiri conveys by the phrase “*Thannan Thani Ninra Adhu*” in this verse. In verse 28 he said, “*Verum Thaanaai Nilai Ninra Adhu*”, which also conveys the same meaning. ‘*Thani*’ means alone; and the phrase ‘*Thannan Thani*’ is not a mere repetition of words, but a purposeful composition to convey the Upanishadic import.

When we are in a forest or a secluded place, away from people, we are alone. But, it does not mean that there are no other persons in the world. People are there, though not within our visibility. But Reality or Brahman is not alone in this sense. It is *Alone*, all by Itself; and there is nothing second to It. Hence It is described as 'Thannan Thani', and not as 'Thani'—One Alone, and not as one; because one implies two, three, etc. also. It is One without a second,—*Ekameva* (One only) *Advitiyam* (secondless) *Brahma* (is Brahman),—*Thannan Thani* (Alone, by itself) *Ninra* (which is) *Adhu* (That—Brahman).

Now, a doubt may arise in our minds. If Brahman alone exists and there is nothing second to It, what is it that we see as the world? Vedanta boldly declares that the world is a mere appearance, and that too a phase of Reality Itself; it does not independently 'exist' as a second entity other than That. It has no existence or reality of its own. Its existence is the existence-aspect of Brahman. That we see a thing does not mean that it has an existence of its own. There are many instances in our day-to-day life which can illustrate this. Take the case of the ocean and the waves. The ocean is a huge mass of water and the wave a crest of water in the ocean. Now, Is there anything in the wave other than water? No. The wave is water, is the ocean. Only we call it a wave, due to our perception being limited to a part and not the whole, to the appearance and not the essence. So is the case with the world. It is an appearance, whose reality is Brahman. We are deluded by the variegated names and forms, which are like waves in the ocean of Satchidananda. Just as the wave is a phase of the ocean, so is the world an aspect of Brahman or Reality. Not only the 'other' objects of the world are like waves, but we ourselves, too, are like waves. Our perception of the world is like one wave beholding another, which both are but phases of the same mass of water. Now, if a wave wants to know the ocean, what has it to do? So long as it is a wave, it cannot know the ocean; because it is so small and the ocean so vast. The wave cannot expand itself to the extent of the

ocean. But there is a way to it. The wave is, in essence, water and the ocean too is nothing but water. Both are of the same substance. Hence when the wave just subsides, it becomes the ocean, it is the ocean; and it knows the ocean. And, to the ocean there are no waves; they are the ocean itself. So is the case with the Jivas and the world. The Jiva is nothing but a crest of consciousness in the ocean of Satchidananda. The world too is nothing but the *Sat* or existence aspect of Brahman. Their essence, their reality is Brahman. When the Jiva or individuality subsides, like the wave, Satchidananda alone is and It knows Itself. Knowing the Absolute is, therefore, being the Absolute Itself. *Brahmavid Brahmaiva Bhavati*—the Knower of Brahman becomes Brahman, says the scripture. Hence Arunagiri says, "*Thaan (Adhuvaaga Irundhu) Ariya*". The way to the Infinite is, therefore, not extention but extinction of individuality or Jivatva. The essence in the Jiva, which is also the essence of the cosmos, which is God, has to know itself by being itself, and not try to know 'something else' in which process externalisation is involved. The finite has to relinquish itself in the Infinite which is its Substratum as well as the Substratum of everything.

Hence That which is One without a second, is to be known by one by being It. Except this there is no other go. Reality has to be experienced by each for oneself. It cannot be explained to others, for want of means of communication. Experiences cannot be related to others. Even ordinary sense-experiences like pleasure, pain, sweetness, beauty, etc., cannot be communicated to others. What to speak of the Experience-Absolute, where the experiencer himself is transformed into the Absolute? Who is to tell, and to whom? Neither 'he' is, nor the 'other' is, That alone is; It has to be experienced by each one for oneself, by being It Itself.

What, then, is the use of the realisation of the illumined souls, saints and sages, if their experience is not going to be of any help to others, may be our pertinent doubt. It is true that they cannot communicate their experi-

ence, but they can, and they do, show us the way to attain that experience, because they have trodden the path. Though the experience of the sweetness of sugar-candy had by one cannot be communicated to another, yet he can show us the means of obtaining it and tasting it for ourselves by which we too can have the same experience. This is what the Saint does in the latter half of the verse. Meditation is the royal road to the Experience, affirms Arunagiri. Meditation on what? On the *Vel* or Murugan, which are identical. The *Vel* is Lord Murugan, and Lord Murugan is the *Vel*. Now, what is the method of meditation? As the means determines the end, and the Goal being realisation of the non-dual Brahman as mentioned in the earlier part of the verse, the meditation suggested by Arunagiri to achieve it is a masterly one. But the technique of meditation hinted at is so secretly hidden that it is difficult to extract it from the verse and it is even likely to go unnoticed. Arunagiri addresses the Lord as "*Minnum Kadir-Vel Vigirdhaa*", in which is the clue to meditation hidden. The nature of the Lord or Reality is revealed in this phrase, a correct understanding of which is itself the technique of meditation. Let us first see the plain meaning of the phrase, which is, "O Lord of varied forms, with the lightning luminous-*Vel*." The *Vel* is Wisdom-*Vel*; *Kadir-Vel*. It shines, like the sun, by itself; It is self-luminous. It also flashes forth wisdom or light, like a lightning; It is *Minnum Kadir-Vel*. The Lord is many-formed. He is the *Bala-Murugan* who imprisoned Brahma and incidentally gave Upadesa on Pranava or Omkara to Lord Siva (verse 36); He is the Lord with six-faces (Shanmukha); He assumed many forms in the battle with the Asura Surapadma; He took the forms of a hunter, tree, old man, etc., to accept Valli; and He appears in the form in which His devotees worship or meditate on Him. Thus He has numerous forms. These are the simple and plain meanings of the phrase. But it has a deeper significance which affords the clue to right meditation.

The *Vel*, as we have seen in many earlier verses, is the Absolute Consciousness. It is the Atman or Brahman.

What is its nature? It is self-luminous; it is *Kadir-Vel*. It is the unchanging Reality, the Substratum of everything. It is not merely that, i.e., the Kadir-Vel; it is also '*Minnum*', i.e., 'twinkling' or 'flashing'. It shines as the Absolute Consciousness and it also twinkles as the innumerable Jivas. The Jivas are the flashes or reflections of the light of the Atman in the intellects. Not merely this. The Lord is also of forms varied; He is *Vigirdhan*. Whatever we perceive are His forms only. In verse 51 also Arunagiri says, "O Lord who comes as all forms (*Uruvaai*) and as all without form (*Aruvaai*), etc." He Himself appears as all these names and forms, which have no reality in them apart from the reality or existence of the Absolute. "He it is that as an old man totters with a stick, thus deceiving the human eye, for He is all things," says the Upanishad.

Thus, the *Kadir-Vel* (Absolute Reality) appears ('twinkles' or *Minnum*) as the Jivas from one aspect, and as the vast creation of forms varied (*Vigirdhaa*) from the other. How beautifully and aptly has Arunagiri composed the phrase with '*Kadir-Vel*' in the middle, and '*Minnum*' and '*Vigirdhaa*' on either side of it, to show that the latter are the two aspects of the *Kadir-Vel* which is their Substratum,—the evershining, self-luminous Reality.

The declaration of the Upanishads that this visible universe and the Jivas are none other than (phases of) Brahman Itself, as was explained earlier in this verse, is revealed and confirmed by Arunagiri in this phrase "*Minnum Kadir-Vel Vigirdhaa*".

It will thus be seen that the visible world, the individual Jivas and the Absolute Reality are nothing but He or the *Vel*. The Absolute which is *what really is*, is also *what we are*, and is also *what we see*. There is nothing other than the Great Reality. Everything is a phase of It, as the waves, ripples, etc., are of the ocean. This is the secret of meditation prescribed by Saint Arunagiri to attain the Supreme Reality which is One without a second (*Thannan Thani Ninra Adhu.*)

Those who meditate thus (*Ninaivaar*), their miseries the Lord destroys (*Kinnam Kalaiyum*). The greatest of all miseries is that of Samsara or transmigration, the endless cycle of births and deaths. This is overcome only when one knows the Supreme by being It. How can one be freed from the need to be born so long as one is a limited being? The limited cannot rest at peace as long as it is separated from the Unlimited, as long as it does not feel and realise its oneness with the Limitless. The river cannot be at rest unless and until it reaches the ocean and be the ocean. The child cannot be cajoled with anything except its mother's lap. The Jiva cannot escape transmigration, cannot but be tossed about by its own Karmas (which become inevitable on account of its limited consciousness which makes it feel that there is something outside it with which it has to establish relations), so long as it does not realise its identity with *what is*. The false notion of individuality or separatist existence is the source of all miseries, which is put an end to by the most potent weapon of meditation on Reality,—as the Absolute and the relative; as the Invisible and the visible; as Consciousness and matter; as the self-luminous, twinkling *Vel* and Lord Murugan of forms varied; as *Minnum Kadir-Vel Vigirdhaa*;—on *what Is*.

If one is earnest and sincere in this meditation, success is certain, assures Arunagiri. Because, he adds, the Lord is an embodiment of grace and compassion. He is the grace-overflowing, the grace-shedding Flame (*Krupai Soozh Sudar*). '*Sudar*' means flame, resplendence, Jyoti,—*Atma Jyoti*. It is *Chaitanya* or Consciousness, the Light that shines steadily,—the Kutastha Atman. In the word '*Sudar*' is implied steadiness or unflickering nature. It is, therefore, the Kutastha Chaitanya, not the Jiva-consciousness which constantly changes. Further, this Flame is grace-surrounded (*Krupai Soozh*). That it is surrounded by, or that it sheds, grace shows that it itself is a mass of grace. The sun which is a mass of light sheds light. As rays of light emanate from the sun, so also rays of grace overflow from the Lord who is an embodiment of grace. What we receive is but an infinitesi-

mal part of the grace that comes from Him. But that is more than enough to destroy the misery of Samsara and illumine us.

The phrase "*Krupai-Soozh Sudar*" also provides a clue to meditation. It is meditation on the Atman (*Sudar*) which is a mass of Light, blissful in nature and grace overflowing. Such a meditation will put an end to all miseries.

Thus the two phrases "*Minnum Kadir-Vel Vigirdhaa*" and "*Krupai Soozh Sudar*" beautifully suggest the highest types of meditation to attain the Undivided Existence-Consciousness-Bliss Absolute.

If the Lord is an embodiment of compassion, a grace-mass, why should He remove the miseries of only those who think of Him and not of all? Fire has the property to burn, but it does not mean it will burn any object, anywhere. It will burn only those that are offered into it, with which it comes into contact. The *Ganga* purifies the sins of only those that take a dip in it. The sun gives light. But if one remains in a closed room or wraps oneself up and would not expose oneself, what can the sun do? Even so, the Lord is compassionate, no doubt, but one should open one's heart to Him, so that His grace may be felt by one. One should 'want' God, and God gives Himself to him. He does not want rich presents, high learning or a sharp intellect. He wants, that we want Him. Selfless service with the feeling of God's presence, study of scriptures that extol His glories, Japa, Kirtan, charity, meditation, etc., are all different practices to open one's heart to the Divinity that dwells within, to that Resplendence which is overflowing with grace.

Thus to think of the Lord unceasingly, depending on Him for one's existence and wanting Him truly will destroy one's miseries and draw His Divine Grace which will manifest within as the Resplendent *Vel* or Pure Consciousness,—an experience which each one has to have for oneself and cannot be related to another.

[Here is Arunagiri's instruction to aspirants that an

all-inclusive meditation is the royal means to the realisation of the Absolute or God-Experience which cannot be related but has to be experienced by oneself.

Such verses give a positive clue that Arunagiri was a saint of the highest Advaitic realisation.]

VERSE—50

Madhikettu Aravaadi Mayangi Arak
Gadhikettu Avame Kedavo Kadaveen
Nadhiputthira Jnaanasukhaadhipa Ath
Dhithi Putthirar Veeradu Sevagane

*Reasoning lost, enervated and deluded most,
Losing the Goal of virtuous life, shall I in vain be lost?
O Son of Ganga, Lord of Wisdom-Bliss, and the Great!
Diti's sons' prowess destroyer, O Lord of Might!*

“O Son of river (Ganga)! O Lord of Wisdom-Bliss! O Hero Who vanquished the prowess of the sons of Diti! Intellect confounded, much distressed (in mind) and deluded, losing that great Blessedness (of *Anubhuti*) which accrues from a virtuous or righteous life, am I to be lost in vain? (No; it cannot happen.)”

EXPLANATION

We are now approaching the consummation of the work, *Kandar Anubhuti*, and almost everything about the life spiritual and Sadhana has been said by the Saint. Before concluding his work with a grand description of the *Sahaja Samadhi Avastha* or the natural, superconscious state of a Jivanmukta, in the next which is the last verse, Arunagiri poses, in this verse, a peculiar condition which will invariably be experienced by every Sadhaka sometime or other in his spiritual march, and prescribes a powerful means of avoiding such a predicament or overcoming it when it prevails. All this is done by the Saint in his own inimitable way, i.e., by placing himself in the position of a seeker.

In spite of one's vast study, long years of practice and considerable amount of advancement in the spiritual path, there come moments when the understanding of the seeker

gets deluded and bewildered and he loses his power of reasoning. We may wonder as to why this should happen. But this is quite natural and there are various factors which might bring about this situation. Let us see a few major ones.

Doubts of various kinds start assailing seekers even after years of practice. "I have been doing Sadhana for such a long time; but I do not seem to have achieved anything substantial! Is the path I am treading a suitable one for me; or, is there something wrong in my practice? Have I chosen a proper Guru and is he competent to take me to the Goal? Am I really progressing or am I deceiving myself with false satisfactions?" Such critical moments are not uncommon in the life of spiritual seekers. Again, when one reads books of different authors advocating different techniques, or listens to the different teachings of preachers of vested-interests, or resorts to different methods of practice prompted, though unconsciously, by one's own lurking desires which come to the surface for their fulfilment at the opportune time, one gets bewildered and is at a loss to know as to what to do. Again, when a seeker is faced with hard obstacles, or when he is put to severe test, or when he is placed under unfavourable circumstances, or is assailed by sickness, etc., his intellect gets confounded and he fails to understand as to what is happening to himself. It is at these junctures that his faith in the efficacy of his practice, in the competency of his Guru, and in his own fitness to the spiritual path, gets a rude shaking. He is then likely to lose his reasoning power.

Thus, though the reason for the seeker to get confounded may be more than one, the net result is one and the same, viz., loss of reason or confounding of the intellect. In the word '*Madhikettu*' with which Arunagiri begins this verse, and by which is meant 'reasoning lost', he may be said to imply the various factors which bring about the loss of reasoning power.

Now, what happens when one's reasoning power gets

confounded? All the evils that come in its wake at once befall the seeker. The intellect being the highest faculty in an individual, when it is confused, the mind also gets enervated and gloomy. It cannot think properly. The confused intellect and the deluded mind, having lost the power of reasoning, mistake the wrong for the right, the pleasant for the good, pursue that which is detrimental to their own ultimate good, advance illogical arguments to justify their wrong pursuits and thus go astray from the chosen Goal. What is the result of these? He gets lost in bewilderment and perishes in the end. All this is on account of confusion of intellect which may be brought about by various factors.

These are the crucial hours when the Sadhaka needs a peculiar kind of strength from within, which can save him from being torn asunder. It is to tide over these circumstances, as also to save oneself from falling a prey to such a predicament, that this verse is given by the Saint, which provides the needed inner strength and enthusiasm to overcome the passing difficulty, which if not tackled suitably will result in one's destruction.

What is that strength? It is not Sadhaka's own strength of understanding, etc., but is from a different source altogether. It is in the intrinsic, essential nature of the Lord,—the Object of one's devotion and meditation. How can loss of reason, etc., befall him who is faithfully devoted to Lord Skanda, or to any Lord? It can never happen, assures Arunagiri. Why? Because the Lord is such. He is the 'river-son'; He is the Wisdom-Bliss Absolute (*Jnana-Sukha*); and He is the vanquisher of the prowess of the Asuras.

Lord Skanda is the *Nadi-Putra*; His Avatara took place in the holy river Ganga. He is the Lord of *Jnana* and *Sukha*,—Wisdom and Bliss. He is the destroyer of the prowess of the *Diti-Putras*, the sons of Diti,—the Asura Surapadma and his brothers were born of Diti to Sage Kasyapa. What a grand concept! The Jnana-Sukha Lord manifested Himself as the *Nadi-Putra* to destroy the *Diti-Putras*.

The waters of the Ganga rush down from the high Himalayan peaks; and its flow is also perennial. Even so Lord Skanda's grace descends upon His devotees, spontaneously and incessantly. Again, even as the 'river-son' destroyed the Diti's sons, the Divine grace annihilates the evils that follow loss of reasoning. In response to the devout prayers of the Devas, the Lord whose essential nature is Jnana-Sukha appeared as the son of river Ganga and destroyed the sons of Diti and brought freedom and bliss to the Devas. Even so the Lord or the Self, whose very nature is Satchidananda, manifests Himself as inner divine grace which removes all the difficulties of the Sadhaka and fills him with strength and joy. Therefore, when one's Object of devotion or meditation is the Wisdom-Bliss Lord Skanda, how can confusion of intellect, etc., arise in him? And even if they arise, how can they stand before that embodiment of Knowledge and Bliss, whose grace instantaneously flows into the Sadhaka's heart and removes them? When one's ideal is the Blissful-Awareness or the Self, which is one's essential nature, how can confusion or gloom show its head in a seeker? As long as one is aware that one's true being is the Atman, one cannot be swayed by the passing moods of the mind and intellect.

Thus, in these powerful modes of addressing the Lord, Arunagiri rules out the possibility of confusion, etc., arising in a Sadhaka, wherein also is implied the assurance that such a thing can never befall him. A deep reflection on the full import of the verse is capable of infusing such a strength into the heart of the seeker that he can overcome any obstacle in his Sadhana. The verse is like a pick-me-up in crucial moments.

"Reasoning lost, confounded, deluded and deprived of Moksha, am I to perish! Can such a condition befall me! No, it can never happen. Because, O Lord, Thou, to whom I am devoted and who art my Object of meditation, art the grace-showering 'river-son', the Lord (embodiment) of Wisdom-Bliss (Jnana-Sukha), and the vanquisher of the prowess of Diti's sons." Thus does Arunagiri assure a true seeker whose Goal is clear and well-conceived that he can never come

to be assailed by confusion, etc. Let all Sadhakas, therefore, take to heart that Divine Grace is unfailing in its nature, and that so long as they do not lose sight of the Goal, divine grace shall protect them and they can never come to perish.

The verse may also be taken as an appeal to the Lord to save one from losing the goal of God-Attainment or *Anubhuti*, on account of loss of reason, confusion of intellect, delusion, etc. "Am I destined to perish? O Lord! Let it not happen. Save me," is the appeal of a helpless devotee or seeker. Arunagiri has so powerfully worded and composed the verse that a sincere recitation of it brings tears in one's eyes, which draw into one's heart that ever-descending grace of the Lord. This verse is a boon to seekers in the hours of bewilderment and confusion, and a daily prayerful repetition of it will also safeguard one against any such contingency.

[The grand work of *Kandar Anubhuti* is approaching its consummation in the next verse, wherein is a glorious description of the exalted state of a Jivanmukta who is ever established in God. Before that, Saint Arunagiri gives a final and solemn assurance to all that an earnest aspirant can never be lost in confusion, etc., so long as his ideal is the Lord, grace-showering, Wisdom-Bliss and evil-destroying in nature. A true devotee of the Lord or an honest seeker after Truth can never be lost or deprived of his Goal.

We have seen earlier (in verse 43) that the liberated soul moves about freely ministering spiritual food to hungry souls according to each one's needs. Thus are verses 45 to 50, of which the advices in verses 45 to 49 are specific in nature. In this verse he gives a common advice and assurance which will be helpful to every kind of seeker, irrespective of the path one treads, as everyone is bound to face this situation, for one reason or the other, sometime or the other in one's spiritual career.

The placing of this verse as the last but one of the work seems to suggest that it is like the *Phalasruti*,—the verse that declares or assures the beneficial results accruing

from a devoutful and regular recitation of the work, viz., an assurance that those who recite the *Kandar Anubhuti* and follow its teachings will unfailingly receive the grace of the all-purifying, Wisdom-Bliss Lord, which will wipe off one's confusion, delusion and other obstacles that might come in the way of one's attaining the Goal, viz., *Anubhuti* or God-Experience.]

VERSE—51

Uruvaai Aruvaai Ulathaai Ilathaai
Maruvaai Malaraai Maniyaai Oliyaai
Karuvaai Uiraaai Gathiyaa Vidhiyaai
Guruvaai Varuvaai Arulvaai Gugane

*With form and formless, what is not and what is,
Flower and fragrance, gem and radiance,
Body and soul, Salvation and rules of righteousness,
O Lord Who comes (as all and) as Guru! O Guha! Bestow
Thy Grace.*

“O Almighty Lord Guha! O Supreme Being Who comes (as all these which are) with form and without form, as what is and what is not, as flower and (its) fragrance, as gem and (its) radiance, as body (universe) and soul (universal spirit) (that pervades and animates it), as the rules of righteousness and *Moksha* (that is attained through them) (i.e., as the means and as the End), and as the Guru! Bestow Thy Grace (on all).”

EXPLANATION

This is a very beautiful verse with which Saint Arunagiri concludes his divine work *Kandar Anubhuti*. This verse is a spontaneous and ecstatic outpouring of Arunagiri's highest experience of God, composed in a simple, melodious and majestic style which lulls one into a spiritual mood even as one recites it.

In this verse, Arunagiri portrays graphically the highest state of God-intoxication of a fully illumined Jnanin,—the *Sahaja Samadhi Avastha*, which is an outcome of his own experience and which is experienced by Self-realised saints.

The Sadhaka who attained the *Pesaa Anubhuti* or Speech-

less Experience or *Maha Mowna* (verse 43), on rising from that Experience as a Jivanmukta beholds the Lord alone,—within as the *Vel* and without as the Feet that shine everywhere (verse 44). With this God-awareness he moves about doing *Lokasangraha* or spiritual service for the solidarity of the world by giving the needed guidance to seeking souls. By and by his awareness of God becomes deep and more and more saturated, so much so that he gets established in a state of perpetual and uninterrupted consciousness of God or Sahaja Avastha, wherein established he does not merely behold God *in* everything but beholds Him *as* everything. To him it is not that God is in everything, but God *is* everything and so God comes as everything. Whatever he sees, touches, smells, tastes or hears is God. Whatever he thinks, feels, or understands is God. God is above and below; God is matter and spirit; God is the path and the Destination; within is God; without is God. Everything is God. Everywhere is God. Such is the majesty of the Divine Experience of a liberated soul that is poured through this verse by the Saint of God-Experience. As saint Thayumanavar said, Saint Arunagiri had *Anubhuti* of Lord Skanda and as a result gave the work *Kandar Anubhuti* in order that others too may attain that Blessedness which he had attained. Such is the glory of a Self-realised saint!

To such an exalted soul, the usual concepts of form and formlessness, existence and non-existence, etc., which are valid only to the duality-perceiving human mind, become meaningless words. Everything gets transformed and transcended into a homogeneous undivided experience. This mystic experience of a Jivanmukta is impossible of description in human language. Yet Arunagiri does it in a most dexterous manner permitted within the limits of a verse of 16 words. He brings all possible concepts in a beautiful manner so as to cover the entire range of human experience and gives us a glimpse of that experience.

The moment we open our eyes, we see things with different forms and shapes. So the first concept we have of things is 'form'. We also sense things without form like

ether, etc. Hence Arunagiri begins the verse with '*Uruvaai, Aruvaai*', i.e., 'with form and without form'. In these two words themselves he covers everything. Form and formlessness,—that is all, there is no third concept known to us, and everything can be brought under these two. In describing the Avatara of Lord Skanda, the Skanda Purana says: '*Aruvamum Uruvum Aagi, Anaadiyaaip Palavaai Onraai, Brammamalai Ninra Jyoti Pizhambu*',—"That Consciousness-Mass (Light) which is the Supreme Brahman; *which is both formless and with form*; which is beginningless, the many as also the One." It is evident from this that anything and everything that has form or is formless, is God and God alone. Hence, it is not that God is only in certain forms or that He can appear only in particular forms. In fact all forms are His only. But this can be experienced only by a Jivanmukta. And so, to the realised soul, says Arunagiri, God comes as all these which have form and which have no form, simultaneously, because He is both (*Uru* and *Aru*).

Then comes the next pair, '*Ulathaai, Ilathaai*', i.e., 'that which is, and that which is not'. People's notion of 'is' and 'is not' differs widely and at different levels of evolution. To the crude materialist, the physical cosmos alone is, i.e., there is only matter, and there is no such thing as God. On the other hand, to the Vedantin, Brahman alone is (i.e., eternally Real), because It is the Absolute, and the world is not (i.e., not eternally real), because it is subject to change and transcendence. But, says Arunagiri, to the illumined sage, God comes both as what is and what is not, whatever our understanding and acceptance of these concepts be. Whether the world is and God is not, or God alone is and the world is not, He comes as both. This is the experience of a full-blown Jnanin of the highest Advaitic realisation, wherein even the physical cosmos, etc., which are initially rejected as '*Neti, Neti*' ('Not this, Not this') for the purpose of sublation and transcendence, are experienced as God Himself or Brahman, as '*Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma*',—"All indeed is Brahman'. Thus in the very first line of the verse, Aruna-

giri has given out in essence the experience of Sahaja Avastha of a Jivanmukta in a most inspiring manner.

It is interesting to note here that in verse 13 Arunagiri described Reality or God as, "Not with form, not without form; not that which is, not that which is not" (*Uruvanru, Aruwanru; Ulathanru, Ilathanru*). Here he says, "God Who comes with form and without form; as that which is and as that which is not" (*Uruvaai, Aruvaai; Ulathaai, Ilathaai*). In verse 13, it is a question of description of the nature of Reality; hence it is said to be neither this nor that. But here, it is a question of *experience* of God; hence He is both this and that. Again, there Arunagiri uses the word '*Adhu*' or 'That' for Reality, which suggests or gives a feeling of remoteness; but here he says '*Guhan*' which means 'He Who shines in the heart-cave', which is suggestive of nearness, rather a feeling of 'possession' as He has come into one's heart, which also indicates that it is one of *experience*. Again, in that earlier stage of Sadhana (of verse 13) the Sadhaka's experience is: 'That Reality Itself is Murugan, is the Lord with the peerless *Vel* and is one's Guru.' Reality or God could be experienced only upto his level. But here, God is all,—with form and without form, what is and what is not, the flower as well as its fragrance, the gem and the light that it emanates, the body as well as the soul (consciousness) that animates it, the Goal or Moksha as also the path (of righteousness or Dharma) that leads to it, and finally the Guru. A critical study of these two verses would reveal the vast gulf of difference that obtains between 'description' and 'experience' of Reality. God can be experienced but not explained or understood.

Now, let us proceed further. From the mutually exclusive and positive-negative concepts of with form and without form, or what is and what is not, Arunagiri takes us to those of substance and its quality,—flower and fragrance, gem and lustre. A substance and its quality are not mutually exclusive like those of with form and without form or what is and what is not; they can go together. Yet they

are not one and the same. The flower is one thing and its fragrance is another, the gem and the light that it sheds are two different things. But to a liberated soul, the flower is God and the fragrance that it wafts is also God; the gem and the lustre that emanates from it are both He only. Hence Arunagiri says '*Maruvaai Malaraai, Maniyaai Oliyaai*', i.e., as flower and its fragrance, as gem and its lustre, in the second line of the verse, which concepts are of an advanced nature in human experience.

He then says, '*Karuvaai Uirai, Gathiyai Vidhiyai*', i.e., 'as body and soul, as Moksha and rules'. The body is *Jada* or an inert object and the soul is *Chetana* or a conscious principle. The soul animates and activates the body. Without the soul, the body becomes lifeless and decays. The value, the beauty, etc., of the body lie in the life-principle. But the soul too cannot exist without a body (physical, subtle or causal) and work out its Karmas, and attain Moksha. That God comes as body and soul shows that He is both matter and spirit which cannot exist independent of each other, as they are mutually dependent. Again, He is the state of *Moksha* or Liberation as well as the *Vidhi* or rules of commission prescribed in the Vedas, Agamas, etc. The rules of Dharma are the means and Moksha is the End. Dharma or righteousness leads to Moksha, and Moksha is the determining factor as to whether an act or rule of conduct is Dharmic or not, is righteous or not. Though the two are mutually determining, yet they are not one and the same. But to the Jivanmukta God is both and comes as both. Thus in the third line of the verse, the concepts of mutual dependence and determination are conveyed, which are more advanced than those of the earlier ones and cover the highest range of human experience.

All these concepts of mutual exclusion and contradiction (line 1), of substance and its quality (line 2), and of mutual dependence and determination (line 3) are a graduated series in the development of human thinking and understanding, which cover all possible ranges of human experience, and they are given in pairs to show that they are not

identical. Hence to us humans God can come either as this or that of the two concepts, and this is so because of our individualistic existence, as a personality. The Jiva-consciousness is caught up in the process of spatio-temporal existence. It has limited itself to a particular mind and body, as a result of which it has notions of inside and outside. Again, because it externalises itself through the senses, its perception gets limited and it can only see, hear or sense things only in a limited capacity. Therefore there arise the concepts of form and formlessness, flower and fragrance, body and soul, etc., in the bound soul. But the liberated one has freed himself from the limitations of spatio-temporal existence and has identified himself with God who is all things at once. To such a blessed soul who has identified himself with everything, there is nothing inside or outside, with form or without form, etc; God is everything and He comes as everything, not in succession but simultaneously. This is to experience God or oneself in everything as everything at once. And it is this experience that we are given a glimpse of in this verse. Any form that is visible is God and the invisible and formless are also God. What is, is He; and what is not is also He alone. Flower and its fragrance are He. Gem and its lustre (all substances and all qualities), body and soul (cosmos and its animating spirit or Isvara), Dharma and Moksha (means and the End),—everything is He. He comes or is experienced as *all*, at the same time. Can we imagine this experience of the Jivanmukta? Even to think, it is baffling. A moment's contemplation of this mystic experience is enough to instill a thrill of ecstasy in us.

Now Arunagiri proceeds to the fourth line and says, God comes as Guru. Peculiarly enough here Arunagiri does not use a pair of concepts as in the earlier lines, but a single concept because Guru is God Himself (verse 13) and all concepts merge themselves in the Guru. The Guru Gita says: "Prostration to that Guru who shows the Truth of the word '*Thou*', who pervades the whole universe of mobile and immobile creation with its stationary and moving crea-

tures. Prostration to that Guru who shows the Truth of the word '*That*', who pervades the mobile and immobile creation in the form of the Undivided Infinite. Prostration to that Guru who shows the Truth of the word '*Art*' (in the sentence '*That thou art*'), who, in the form of the Mass of Consciousness, pervades the whole of the three worlds with their mobile and immobile inhabitants. Prostration to that Guru who is beyond *Nada*, *Bindu* and *Kala*, who is Pure Consciousness, Eternal, Peaceful, beyond space, and untainted. Guru is Brahma; Guru is Vishnu; Guru is Siva; Guru is the Supreme Brahman Itself. Prostration to that Guru." Hence in saying Guru, Arunagiri brings together all that has been said in the earlier three lines of the verse. And so, '*Guruvaai Varuvaai Arulvaai Gugane*'—"O Almighty, Who comes as Guru! O Lord Guha! Bestow Thy Grace",—is considered as complete in itself and as equivalent to the whole verse. Here '*Varuvaai*' is used as a gerund or verbal noun (*Vinaiyaalanaiyum Peyar*). This last line also means, "O Lord Guha! Come as (my) Guru and bless (me)." For these reasons it is regarded as a Mantra, and is chanted, recited and sung with love and feeling (Bhakti and Bhava), which brings all blessedness to oneself as also to others.

The first verse of *Kandar Anubhuti* begins with '*Aadum-pari Vel Aniseval*' which is considered as a Mantra—'*Velum Mayilum Thunai*' meaning 'The *Vel* and the Peacock are (my) protection or support.' The last verse of *Kandar Anubhuti* concludes with '*Guruvaai Varuvaai Arulvaai Gugane*', which is also regarded as a Mantra. Thus the work begins and ends with Mantras; and it also contains many Mantras in the other verses. Hence *Kandar Anubhuti* is held in high esteem as a '*Mantra-Sastra*'—a treatise full of Mantras, capable of bestowing all the good that one might seek by a devout and regular recitation of it.

In this verse, the Lord is invoked as '*Guha*' which literally means 'One who dwells or shines in the cave of the heart'. There is a great significance in Arunagiri's selecting this Name of the Lord for this verse, though for the title of the work, *Kandar Anubhuti*, Arunagiri has selected the Name

'Kanda' or Skanda. It is worth noting that in the entire work of *Kandar Anubhuti* there is an explicit reference to the Lord of one place only, viz., Tiruchchengodu or Naagaa-sala, in verse 11. It is probably because the Lord enshrined at this place, to whom Arunagiri made a special prayer, granted him a boon that, wherever he be, if he utters the Name of 'Kanda' and calls the Lord, He would appear and give him Darshan. And so, as a measure of gratitude, Arunagiri seems to have selected the Name of 'Kanda' not only for the title of this treatise, but also for two more of his works, viz., *Kandar Alankaaram* and *Kandar Anthaathi*. But, for this verse and as the last word of it, he has purposefully chosen 'Guha' because it is the Sahaja Avastha verse and 'Guha' is the most appropriate Name to be employed here.

In the Narayana Sukta of the Yajur Veda, there is a grand description of the Supreme Being as follows: The Divine Being is the support of the entire cosmos which is identified with Him. He has thousands of eyes and heads, i.e., all eyes and heads are His. He is the source of joy. He has embodied Himself in man as his support, as the indwelling Spirit which pervades his whole being as well as inside and outside of whatsoever seen or heard (near or far, gross or subtle) is there in this world. He is the Infinite Self; He is the real meditator and meditation; and He is the Goal. He is to be meditated upon. The place for meditation on Him is the ether in the heart. The heart is the great abode of the universe and in the middle of the heart there is a Fire; in the centre of that Fire, there is a tongue or flame of Fire of the colour of shining gold and dazzling like the flash of lightning. The Supreme Being or Paramatman dwells in the middle of that flame. He is the creator Brahma, He is Siva, He is Vishnu, He is Indra, He is the material and efficient cause of the Universe and the Supreme Self-luminous Pure Consciousness, concludes the Sukta. Arunagiri refers to that Supreme Being as 'Guha'—One Who dwells or shines in the cave of the heart; Who is and Who comes as everything and as the Guru. How beau-

tifully does the Saint bring out the essence of the whole of the Narayana Sukta in this single verse of *Kandar Anubhuti*! The Narayana Sukta and the *Kandar Anubhuti* are both the overflow of divine ecstasy of illumined souls that were bathed in the ocean of Consciousness-Bliss. Hence significantly and purposefully did Arunagiri select the Name of 'Guha' for this concluding, Sahajavastha verse.

'Guha' is the Supreme Consciousness that reveals Itself everywhere as everything. He is the Self or Brahman in which a liberated soul is established. 'Guha', being the Self of the Jivanmukta as well as of the cosmos, comes as everything. God's coming as everything does not mean a physical coming of things involving movement in space and time, but 'coming in experience', i.e., whatever is, is experienced as God. This is God-coming or God-Experience. It is something different from physical coming because if God, as an object with form (*Uru*), were to come towards a liberated soul, He has to move in space which also is He only, space being without form (*Aru*). Hence when Arunagiri says that God comes as this, as that, as everything, it mystically means that the Jivanmukta experiences everything as God, as his own Self, as 'Guha', because he has identified himself with or become the Universal Self, i.e., the Self of all. He, therefore, recognises or feels his Self in everything and everything in the Self; he sees the Seer in the seen and the seen in the Seer; he experiences God as all and all as God. This is the essence of God-vision (*Bhagavad Darsan* or *Atma-Darsan*) which Arunagiri purports to convey through this verse. These are all different ways of expressing the inner mystic experience of a Jivanmukta, which is described in the language of the humans as 'with form, without form, etc., etc.', which is intended to reveal that it is a simultaneous experience of all things at one and the same time. This perception of non-difference is the culmination of God-Experience,—*Abheda Darsanam Jnanam*. Such a sage of Wisdom is a moving God on earth, to whom the world resorts for succour, in whom all beings find solace, around whom seeking souls gather like hungry children around the mother,

and for whom nothing makes any difference because of his *Abheda Darsanam*. This is the Sahaja Avastha of Jivan-muktas who are *Sarvabhuta-Hiteratah*,—those intent upon the welfare of all beings, of whom Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj was one. He writes in '*Sivananda Gita*' (concise Autobiography): "To raise the fallen, to lead the blind, to share what I have with others, to bring solace to the afflicted and to cheer the afflicted and suffering are my ideals. To have perfect faith in God, to love my neighbour as my own Self, to love God with all my heart and soul, to protect cows, animals, women and children are my aims. My watchword is love. My goal is Sahaja Samadhi Avastha, or the natural, continuous superconscious state." This is the humble way in which Swami Sivananda puts what he actually was and did.

God is *Satchidananda*. He is an ocean of Indivisible Existence-Consciousness-Bliss. The ocean is nothing but water and God is nothing but Consciousness. *Prajnanam Brahma*,—Pure Consciousness is Brahman, says the Upanishad. Ocean is water, whether calm at the bottom or dashing as waves on the surface. Similarly, it is Satchidananda, whether in that absorbed state of *Pesaa Anubhuti* (verse 43) or as this vast panorama of creation in this Sahaja Avastha. As waves of water dash against each other and mingle with one another, Consciousness rolls over Consciousness and remains as Consciousness. This is the Sahaja Samadhi Avastha or the natural Super-conscious state of a liberated sage. In verse 43 Arunagiri described the '*Pesaa Anubhuti*' wherein the objective world is totally negated and one gets absorbed in Speechless-Experience or Maha-Mouna. But, on rising from that Experience, when he moves about in 'this world of ours' for the sake of Lokasangraha, what does he experience? To him the world ceases to be as we perceive it. It is sublated into God. The self-same *Satchidananda* dances as all these names and forms, as all qualities and substances, as the physical, subtle and causal realms,—in short as everything. Whatever the senses perceive, the mind thinks or the intellect understands is all *Satchidananda*; because they

have all been transformed by the magical touch of God-Consciousness. It is Consciousness beholding Consciousness, God beholding God, There is no man, no world; but God and God alone. A Grand Experience! However much we may try to explain this experience of Sahaja Avastha, it would be inadequate and unsatisfying, because it is not something to be explained but experienced.

Here, we may have an interesting digression. Some are of the opinion that the first 43 verses of the work are only Arunagiri's original compositions, as verse 43 concludes saying, "*Pesaa Anubhuti Pirandhadhuve*—Speechless-Experience was born", and that the remaining last 8 verses are not Arunagiri's and are subsequent additions by someone else. But others hold that all the 51 verses are Arunagiri's own and original compositions; they being of an exceptional nature and also a work called '*Thanigai Ula*' says, "All the 50 Anubhutis (verses) are gems that confer Blissful-Experience". From our study we can conclude that all the 51 verses of *Kandar Anubhuti* are Arunagiri's own; and in fact the last 8 verses are the real cream and essence of the work. These verses are of an extraordinary nature and we can even affirm without the least hesitation that none but Arunagiri could compose such pithy verses of a high spiritual calibre. The entire essence of Vedantic Sadhana as well as many secret clues to higher meditation are so mystically revealed in these verses that a saint of Arunagiri's attainment only could do it. Also, as we have seen in our explanations of verses 43 and 44, it is rare that those who attain the Speechless-Experience (*Pesaa Anubhuti*, verse 43) remain absorbed in it and never emerge from it. On the other hand more often than not they do rise from it and move about as Jivan-muktas and guide the aspirants. Else how are we to account for the rich legacy of spiritual wisdom that we have inherited today? Were Arunagiri and other saints to remain absorbed in *Samadhi* and not rise from it and give us such divine gifts, what would be our pitiable condition? Even this precious gift of *Kandar Anubhuti* which, as Thayumana-var said, was given to us by Arunagiri *after* his attaining

God-Experience could not otherwise have come to us. Hence it would not be proper to conclude that because 'Speechless-Experience was born' occurs in verse 43, the work ends with that verse. *Samadhi* or the state of total absorption in superconsciousness is not necessarily the culmination of *Anubhuti* or God-Experience. *Sahaja Samadhi* or the natural and continuous superconscious state is the final Experience, as we have seen from the words of Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. While he is absorbed in *Samadhi*, the liberated one is in static identity with God; when he rises from it, he is in dynamic identity experiencing God in and as everything. '*Kandar*' or Skanda (God) is all things. *Kandar Anubhuti* or God-Experience is, therefore, to experience God as all things and all things as God. This is *Sahaja Samadhi* and this is the purport of this verse. Of course, *Samadhi* and *Sahaja Samadhi*,—or static and dynamic identity,—are only from our standpoint, and they are not relevant to the Jivanmukta himself who is ever in identity with God. Since, however, we see him 'absorbed' or 'moving about, walking etc.,' we make this distinction between *Samadhi* and *Sahaja Samadhi*, between static identity and dynamic identity, for our convenience. If static identity is '*Pesaa Anubhuti*', we may term dynamic identity as '*Nadamaadum Anubhuti*'. And this state is so very graphically portrayed in this verse. Those blessed to be in this state are verily moving Gods on earth, '*Nadamaadum Theivam*', of whom Saint Arunagiri is unique. Who but Arunagiri could pour out one's experience in such ecstatic and mystic terms as in this last verse!

Now, let us see the whole verse: "O Lord Guha! O Supreme Being Who comes (as all these which are) with form and without form, as what is and what is not, as flower and (its) fragrance, as gem and (its) lustre, as body (universe) and soul (Universal Spirit) (that animates it), as Moksha and the rules of righteousness (as the End and the means), and as the Guru! Bestow Thy grace."

'*Arulvaai*',—'Bestow Thy grace' or 'Bless',—says Arunagiri. Bless whom? It is not "Bless me" but "Bless all". Because, what more blessing does that Jivanmukta of such an elevated state need? He himself is a blessing to others. It is, therefore, more appropriate to take it as his prayer to Lord Guha, Who comes as all and as Guru, to bless all by coming (as everything and) as their Guru. That blessedness of God-Experience which he enjoys, he prays to the Lord to confer on others, too. It is a prayer to bless all in general and in particular those who recite this Moksha-conferring *Kandar Anubhuti*, who study it systematically (Parayana and Svadhyaya), understand it and try to put its teachings into practice even in a small measure. God is all. He comes as all. So He is beseeched to bless All. Arunagiri could not content himself with his *Anubhuti*. He wishes that everyone should have God-Experience, even as Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj wished. Swami Sivanandaji says, "I heard a Voice from within: 'Siva, wake up, and fill the cup of your life with this nectar; share it with all. I shall give you strength, energy, power and wisdom.' I obeyed His command. He did fill the cup and I shared it with all." The one thing that Swamiji never was tired of hammering in all his writings and speeches was: "Goal of life is God-realisation. You must attain it in this very birth." And in the end he would add a benediction, "May you all shine as Jivanmuktas in this very birth!" Such was his eagerness that all should have Divine Experience. So was Arunagiri's too, and he gave this beautiful word-garland of *Kandar Anubhuti* to the world in order that everyone might offer it to Lord Skanda by a devout recitation of it and thereby have that Divine Experience which was specially conferred on him to be shared with all.

Thus ends the grace-bestowing, soul-elevating, mystic work *Kandar Anubhuti*,—a complete treatise on Advaitic Realisation and the Sadhana for it.

May the grace of Saint Arunagiri be upon us all! May we daily recite this all-purifying and Moksha-conferring divine gift of *Kandar Anubhuti* and enjoy the grace of Guha!! May He bless us all with God-Experience in this very birth!!!

Om Tat Sat Sivanandarpanamastu

Om Tat Sat Saravanabhavarpanamastu

Om Tat Sat Brahmarpanamastu

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